D 640 M137n 1917

01120230R

NLM 05007283 8

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

A NURSE AT THE WAR

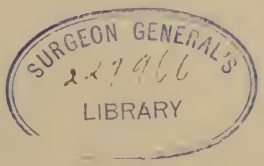
EARLY DAYS WHEN WOMEN COULD GET TO THE FRONT.

A NURSE AT THE WAR

NURSING ADVENTURES IN BELGIUM AND FRANCE

[by Grace McDougall]

NEW YORK
ROBERT M. McBRIDE & CO.
MCMXVII



SURGEON GENERAL'S
227966
LIBRARY

D
640
M137n
1917

Printed in Great Britain

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

FLANDERS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE ROAD TO LIERRE . .	1
II.	MALINES, BUCHEROUT AND VIEUX DIEU	13
III.	ANTWERP — THE BOMBARDMENT AND FLIGHT	43
IV.	GHENT—ARRIVAL : HOSPITALS AND HOSPITALITY : FLIGHT, RETURN, AND THE "BOCHES" . .	56

PART II

FRANCE

I.	HOW THE CORPS CAME TO CALAIS .	81
II.	THE HOSPITAL IN EARLY DAYS .	101
III.	CONVALESCENTS AND CHRISTMAS.	117
IV.	LIFE AT A REGIMENTAL AID POST.	126
V.	A DAY OF ODD JOBS . . .	136
VI.	A NIGHT IN NIEUPORT . .	153
VII.	AN ENGLISH BILLET . . .	161
VIII.	THE SENTRY AND PARIS IN WAR-TIME	172

CHAP.		PAGE
IX.	LIFE AT RUCHARD . . .	182
X.	ODDMENTS—AND THE END. .	193

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
EARLY DAYS WHEN WOMEN COULD GET TO THE FRONT . . *Frontispiece*	
DURING THE FIRST WINTER, 1914 .	16
MASS IN THE TRENCHES . . .	16
RUINS OF A CHURCH	32
WHERE A BOMB FELL . . .	32
LIFE IN THE FRONT LINE . . .	48
DIVISION BEING REVIEWED ON ITS RETURN FROM THE TRENCHES . .	48
SHELL IN CANAL	64
THE MORNING WASH	64
A TRENCH IN THE SAND . . .	96
GUNS HIDDEN IN BRANCHES . .	96
WHERE THE HUN HAS PASSED . .	144
WAYSIDE GRAVES	144
RESTING BY THE WAYSIDE . . .	184
THE FIRST SOLDIERS' CANTEEN IN THE BELGIAN ARMY. RUCHARD, 1915 .	184

PART I

FLANDERS

CHAPTER I

THE ROAD TO LIERRE

THE F.A.N.Y. Corps is not well known, because since the 14th September, 1914, they have been too busy over in Flanders and France to talk of their work. But the F.A.N.Y. Corps that started on active service in the person of one woman is increasing steadily, and at present over 50 members are working in the zone of the armies, and a few more are busy in the centre of France in a big convalescent camp. Their work is varied: motor ambulance work in the actual firing line has now given way to motor ambulance work at the base; the first-aid work behind the trenches has changed to first a clearing hospital and now a base hospital, and the excursions to the front with what were then much-needed comforts have given place to running a big canteen for 700 convalescents. Now the F.A.N.Y.'s have fought their way

to recognition, a few of the experiences one of them underwent may be of interest.

Those were strange days when I was alone in little Belgium. Antwerp was fiercely fought for, and for weeks we worked from morning till night caring for the men who were brought in, broken and torn and shattered. Ah! it made my heart ache and my eyes wet, but I did my best. They were heroes, these men: they did not cry nor grumble nor complain; they smiled, they called me "Petite sœur," and nothing I did failed to please them—though in much I was clumsy and unskilful. There were so many of them—in all the hospital about 200; but on the floor I worked on 64, and some would die and be carried out on a stretcher with a sheet over them, and some would rise and dress and walk out; but what hurt one most were the evacuations.

An evacuation means to empty the hospital, and it was done when news came that the Germans were coming very near. Then men's faces would turn white with horror and with fear, women would tremble and turn faint; and we, who had to work, would spend every

ounce of our strength in dressing those poor fellows—pulling shirts over their shattered bodies, wrapping dressing gowns or coats or what we could round them in their weakness and suffering. We carried them down long stairs on stretchers, even on camp beds if there were not enough stretchers; we ran down stairs with mattresses and lifted them off the stretchers on to the mattress, for we had to take the stretchers to bring down others; and to some of these men each movement meant agony. This used to happen once a week at least! And then very often, after having been taken to the station on a tramcar, the men would all be brought back and have to be carried upstairs again and put back to bed.

Then one afternoon I went out with a motor ambulance to just behind where fighting was. We met a cyclist who said he wanted help at a lonely trench to take men away and so we went. There was a little brick hut or stables, and there the car stopped, and before I got out from inside, the chauffeur and the cyclist and the owner, who was with us, were running hard along the road. It

was flat country, and the road was alongside a deep ditch ; and a few little thin trees were along the roadside. Far away I could see cottages here and there, and there was a lot of noise all round. I was running after the men, when suddenly something made my heart stop and then thump hard. I slowed down and looked all round, and the sun glittered on a silver medal on my breast and held my eye. I put the medal into my pocket, and a feeling of awful loneliness came over me. I was alone, quite alone—there was nobody English near me. At that moment I longed for an Englishman. Then I looked behind—the ambulance looked safe and stolid, somehow ; then I looked ahead. The men who had come with me were jumping down into a trench. I had never seen a trench, but I felt it was one, and into my heart and brain came something I had never felt before, I looked up at the little clouds of smoke breaking in the sky ; I looked ahead and saw great clouds of smoke bursting from the ground ; and I suddenly felt a great exultation, and I ran—ran my hardest—and stood on the edge of the trench and looked in. There

were three or four figures there, very still, in big blue coats, but I hardly noticed them. Two men were lifting a man out and putting him across a third man's back, and a man wearing a heavy uniform coat, with a ragged, untidy moustache, and a white face was trying to climb out of the trench. One of his legs was all torn,—clothing and blood and bandage, and I leapt down beside him. Then, with his hand in mine and his arm drawn round my neck, I pulled and pushed and struggled, and we got out and slowly reached the road. In front of me two men were struggling along, each with an unconscious man hanging over his shoulders, and a group of soldiers who looked tired and were limping. Then suddenly came a terrific noise, so loud it dazed me, and all my sense of thought seemed gone. I stood quite still, and on my left a cloud of dark smoke rose, and a horrid smell. I looked all round—I was alone. My poor man with the shattered leg !—where was he ? I wheeled slowly round, blinking my eyes, and there in the ditch was my sufferer, and all the other men. Then, in a flash, I knew ! It was a shell that had burst

close beside us. I dashed to the ditch and sat down. The men were looking at me with stolid unconcern, they were rising—going on. I went too. Along that bare road we ran at a sort of loping trot. Then through the cloud of deafness that still held me I seemed to hear a wailing scream, and the three soldiers nearest stopped and held on to a little thin tree. I stopped too, facing them, looking in their faces to question them. To me it was all new. I did not understand ; *I* had had none of the horrors they had passed through. All *I* saw was three white scared faces, with fixed eyes,—in them a sort of dumb appeal. They were gasping, their lips were black, their clothes dirty and stained. A demon of mischief woke in me. I thought of a cinematograph, of what we must look like —four hefty people hanging on in fear to a little thin tree ! I laughed ; and their white faces and troubled eyes glared at me, but they ran on. I followed at their heels, and so we reached the ambulance and found the chauffeur already there. Two men lay on the ground—one very white and still unconscious, the other, with wide eyes, moan-

ing. I had some brandy with me and gave him some. We lifted him up, put him on the car—it was a beautifully-fitted car ; the side came down and outwards, and the first stretcher was fitted in its place : then we turned a handle, and the stretcher was raised without any jolting and the other stretcher placed on the board on rails that slid inwards, and so, with no jolting, each sufferer was safely fixed. Inside were two or three folding chairs, and on these we put all the men with wounds that permitted them to sit down. There were three or four, and then there were places for two outside, and still there was one man left. The owner of the ambulance looked at me, but I shook my head and looked at the man who remained ; then the owner leapt aside, told the chauffeur to go on, and waited with me. There were lots of men here, ragged and unwashed heroes, but all cheery and brave and smiling. To them I was a strange being ; to me they were a new revelation. They took me inside and showed me the holes in the roof—in the walls, in the floors ; the bar, where broken glass and china lay scattered still ; the yard behind,

where a dead pig raised a stench of protest to the sky. One lad went to where the shell had burst and brought me a piece of it, a long, thin, jagged bit of iron with cruel edges. He gave it me with a smile, and his fellows watched me and wondered.

"You are not afraid?" one man asked, and seemed to wonder when I laughed.

"You are brave," said another; but I laughed and shook my head vigorously.

"But you were really not frightened?" a sergeant had to ask, and when I looked up at him and said, "Yes, I was really frightened, terribly frightened, for a little time," he shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

Then the car came back, and we got the *blessé* inside; I sat outside with the driver, and the owner sat beside us. We left the wounded in a hospital in Antwerp. After this we drove to the English headquarters, and there we found cars and cars, dozens of them, and soldiers and a few sailors. A staff officer looked surprised to meet me, but we got the directions we wanted and went on.

This time it was another lonely *poste*, empty houses by the roadside, and crowds of

soldiers ; plenty of wounded, too, but most of them already bandaged. We filled the car and sent them in, and I waited for its return. This time the owner could not wait ; he had to go, and so I was left alone. The men were curious, but very courteous ; they all wanted to talk—to know if I was an officer, to ask if I had helped many wounded, to know why I left England and my home to come and help the Belgians.

One man picked me a bunch of flowers ; another took me to see the inside of a little cottage : the room was empty, tables and chairs thrown on the floor, a few little china ornaments, cheap and tawdry, still stood in a cupboard in a corner of the room, and there was a hole in the wall high up—a great gaping hole . . . .

Outside on the road men galloped past, or motor cars whizzed by, and heavy wagons trundled along. Artillery rolled past, the men all turning to salute the Englishwoman in khaki in their midst. The sun was setting, and far away the loud roar of guns cut the evening stillness. This was war ! Up the road slowly came two men on horseback—

they stopped to ask the way; they had a message for the British lines: behind them where a hedge jutted on to the road came a man in khaki afoot. My eyes brightened—one of our own men. I felt suddenly proud. The men round me pointed him out. I nodded; they said to the two men on horseback, "Why not ask *him?*" The two men replied in Flemish and rode off. He came slowly, very slowly. My pride at seeing him began to wane. He started every few steps, and looked fearfully behind him—he dragged along. I went to meet him; my heart was burning. The men round me were watching him, and something within me resented it. He wore khaki—he was a British soldier.

I stopped and waited; he had seen me. Every Belgian soldier saluted and smiled every time I met them. This man—in khaki like myself—did not salute; he shambled up to me—hardly even stopped.

"Are you hurt?" I asked.

"No."

"Where are you going?"

"To ——" (naming the nearest English trenches three kilometres away).

"Are you tired; wouldn't you rather ride or go in a car? I'll ask a lift for you if you like!"

"No; I'm safer walking. I've been in with a message, and I'm going back."

"Do you know the way?"

"Oh, I'll find it!"

He refused a ride in a car. Two or three of the men I had been talking to spoke to him, but he just stared at them and did not answer.

He was in no hurry to go on. He told me suddenly that he never wanted to ride in a car again. He had seen a Belgian officer driving a car, with a priest beside him, just a short time before; then a shell burst, and the officer's head went into the road, and the car and the priest went on a few yards before the car swerved and came to a violent halt. He looked for sympathy. I returned his look coldly, for I was too new at the game to realise what nerve-strain those gallant fellows had to undergo. Many a time since have I regretted my hardness, my stupid lack of understanding, for the poor lad had been through hell!

"It was an awful sight," he muttered, still staring over his shoulder.

"It was; I saw it," I said quietly.

He went on down the road, walking beside a Belgian on horseback—a good-natured fellow, who promised me he would show him the way. I wished the car would come; I felt suddenly depressed. The cheery crowd of Belgian soldiers were too cheery. I resented it. I knew what they had gone through—weeks of weary warfare in the trenches, their country in danger, their homes ruined, their women and children murdered and tortured. And they smiled and talked and spoke with wonder of the courage, of the devotion, of the English! And I saw that shambling figure in khaki, starting at every shadow, looking fearfully over its shoulder.

CHAPTER II

MALINES, BUCHEROUT, AND VIEUX DIEU

One day I was out as usual. The car came for me at 9.30, and we went out to the collecting stations, loaded up, sent the men in, and I waited, doing dressings, for the car to return. One day we went to an old church in the centre of Malines; the beautiful cathedral was desolate and shattered, the windows knocked out, parts of the wall fallen in. All round were houses and cottages battered and rent, empty rooms and broken furniture; it was a sad sight. And out there in the convent church were sadder sights! The sacristy was filled with packets of cotton-wool and bandages, bottles of iodine, and a precious—very precious—bottle of chloroform. In here I went to find two men who had just been carried in: one we took off the stretcher and laid face downwards on a table; he was shot through the buttocks,

and lay without murmuring. The other—poor fellow!—was a big, strong man about five and thirty; he was tenderly laid on a table, his feet and legs propped up with chairs, his shirt cut off as gently as possible. One arm hung by a thread of flesh from the shoulder, and bled—always bled—though the tourniquet was as tight as possible; the dark blood oozed through steadily and fell with a constant drip, drip. He was shot through the diaphragm, too, and, although I was not well acquainted with death then, even *I* could tell his days were numbered. His face, livid and twisted with pain, looked towards us; he cried in a strange voice and a strange tongue, for in those days I knew no Flemish. A surgeon was there, a tall, clever Englishman, and he injected saline. His quick, deft movements fascinated me—I longed to help. Once he looked me full in the eyes, and it seemed to me he wondered what I felt, and I think the pity in my eyes must have answered him. A nurse was there, an English nurse. She was crying as she held the man down, for he was struggling—and to me that, too, was strange; and suddenly she ran away sobbing, so I slipped up

and took her place. The surgeon glanced at me keenly and was apparently satisfied, and so, as the poor fellow struggled and twisted, we held him. I had one arm and side; a priest held the other, and two Belgian women, in white overalls and caps with big red crosses on them, stroked his face and bent over him, speaking to him soothingly in his mother tongue. He shouted and writhed, and at last his head fell back: then, with a mighty effort, he raised himself and opened his mouth to speak; but only a stream of blood rushed forth, and a brave soul had gone to its God!

The chapel was empty as I knelt to whisper a prayer for the dead, and passed on into the outer chapel, where, to my horror, I saw three English women in weird and wonderful costumes having tea, laughing and talking; it was like a tourist party attending a funeral. Something of what I felt was, perhaps, shared by an English doctor. He looked at the women inside; he took a long breath of fresh air and gasped out:

"My God, there's too much joy-riding about this to please me!"

At that moment a stray shell landed in

the courtyard, far away from us, but very near a sturdy little English chauffeur who had just entered! However, it did no harm beyond churning a hole in the yard.

From there I went to a little barricade at a small village, Hofstade; and here were Belgians who had that very morning at 3 a.m. driven the Germans out of the ruins they now held. (That night the Germans took it again —to hold it for good.) From a steep embankment one could see the woods where the Germans were in hiding, and see the country burning all round, for both Belgians and Germans were trying to burn all woods and any sort of "cover." It was a desolate scene. Here was a fine young priest with a brassard on his arm, and a haversack with "First Aid Dressings" on his shoulders; he had been busy all that night and all that early morning succouring his brothers-in-arms spiritually and physically. He was a powerfully-built man, and I said to him, did he find it a very hard life?

"Not hard enough," he replied, "if only I could kill too!"

He spoke with simple regret; for he, too,

DURING THE FIRST WINTER, 1914.

MASS IN THE TRENCHES.

had looked upon war and its horrors. He was the minister of the Lord Christ, and he burned to revenge the devilish deeds that had been perpetrated.

I wandered behind one cottage, and saw a strange heap ; the chauffeur looked at me and held his nose.

"It is not healthy to be here," he said ; but I did not answer, and he came to see why I looked with an awful horror in my face. The smell was enough to knock one down in ordinary times, but in those days, mentally and physically, I could endure tremendous strain. . . .

A gendarme followed and joined us, and we all stood with our eyes fixed on the charred and blackened body that lay there. I had never known a human skeleton would look so small when the flesh was gone round it. Then involuntarily we looked at the tiny cottage, of which the walls still stood ; and little tawdry gilt figures were on the shelves inside ; even a child's cradle lay there—broken, it is true.

The chauffeur showed me brass candlesticks he had looted. I looked at him in wonder ;

I could not think of such things then, with this little village of ruined cottages under my eyes. With him I made a tour of the other houses: everywhere hurried preparation for flight—beds with the blankets still thrown down; china and glass scattered everywhere. One little cheap figure of a child I slipped into my pocket, wondering sadly if it had been some child's treasure. Then in one house the chauffeur hesitated—said I had better not come in; his face was white and his lips shook. I looked past him; and the colour left my cheeks too, and tears came to my eyes. A baby lay there—a tiny waxen form with a cruel bayonet-thrust through its tender flesh. I looked all round. There was only a rough blanket, so I laid that over the little martyr, and into my heart swept a fury of black passion. I thought of the Germans I had known who had children, huge families of children, and had professed to love children; and on that day I cursed Germany and all its people, and I cried to Heaven to avenge the blood of the innocent and defenceless. Cruel it had been to stand by whilst a strong man went out in agony, but crueller was it

to think of this tender babe foully murdered, to picture the mother perhaps ; but no . . . . I rushed out in a panic ; I must have air—must get away from this accursed spot.

Round Antwerp were miles of barbed wire cunningly twisted into an impassable barrier ; moats filled with deep water ; earthworks, barricades ; it was a wonderful sight ; and little did we dream then how futile all these would prove.

One day, after forty-eight hours' rain, we dashed past a stretch of country close to the waterworks : the stench was terrible, thick and heavy, and too horrible for words ; the soft earth was wet and heavy, and disturbed. Others said they saw human limbs sticking upwards, protruding from the earth as if in appeal to Heaven. I did not look closely—I could not. I knew only that 300 corpses had been hastily covered with earth after a fight a week or two before.

One day we were at a line of trenches in an entirely opposite direction—towards Lierre ; there had been many wounded, and the little car had made many journeys. Loaded up inside and with one man between me and the

chauffeur, we started homewards as the sun was setting. I was tired; as usual, I had given my sandwiches to the men who needed them more than I, and suddenly I felt very hungry and feeble inside. Then to my amazement I saw sailors—English sailors—drawn up in a big group, and an English doctor in naval uniform barred our way. He was about as surprised as I was! He held my hand and asked if we could load up one more Belgian who was complaining of bad pain in the side, and his hand lay on mine as he spoke. His face was tired, and his eyes had dark shadows under them; and he was so pleased to see an English girl! We made the Belgian sit where I had been, and I stood on the footboard, holding on with one hand to the roof of the car. On we sped, and the sky was flaming red, and suddenly our road lay clear and straight through long lines of English blue-jackets and marines—miles of them—all marching forth with steady tramp and resolute, kindly faces. How my heart went out to them; and how their ringing friendly cheers brought the blood to my face and a great joy to my heart! No more hunger—

only pride—as these lines of men—my men—went out gaily to fight for *me* and all the women of the Empire.

In the town that night I had to go to six hospitals before getting my load out of the car. That made me think as I went to sleep that night.

Next morning we started off again. This time we got to Bucherout, a small village; and here were English naval doctors working against time, and an Irishwoman and her little four-seater just arrived to interpret for them. Orders for retreat were out, and all the wounded were being packed off as quickly as cars or carts passed within hail. I had only jumped out, when I had to dress a man with a bullet in his arm—I could feel the bullet. The wounded were lying everywhere—on the pavement, propped against the walls. My little car was quickly loaded and sent off: then came a naval ambulance from the front with a man shot to pieces on one stretcher; a shattered thigh on the stretcher underneath; a broken arm and a shrapnel in the head opposite. The doctor, the same whom I had met the night before, looked very weary; he

could only give morphia to the top man, and from there we went to an A.S.C. cart just arrived with six more. We had to unload them, as the cart had to go on for ammunition and go back. One man was very bad ; a dear old Scotchman carried another on his back to the doorway and set him down. I was raiding the empty houses for blankets, pillows, mattresses. Then the Irishwoman went off full speed with her car and chauffeur to get St. John's men and a motor 'bus. She shoved some sandwiches into my hand.

" Make the doctors eat something," she said, and I cornered one—asked him if he could spare two minutes inside the doorway. He looked at me with tired surprise—imagining, probably I was feeling faint !—and acceded. He followed me inside and I slipped round and barred the doorway by standing against it.

" Eat that," I said firmly—" quick ! "—and, laughing, he did so when I assured him there were more for the other doctors. He had been working all night, and he couldn't remember having had anything to eat ; he *thought* he'd had a cup of coffee " somewhere about 6 o'clock " ! !

The motor 'bus arrived at length with twenty St. John's men—fine workers and skilful. We helped all those who could go upstairs, and many who were not fit to go on top; one, a St. John's man and I carried up between us—no easy job on a 'bus stairs! There was one very badly wounded man on the pavement. I begged the doctor to let him be, but he shook his head. "He *may* live some time," he said, "and we must get him out of the way." Shells were not far off and shrapnel everywhere near, so I suppose he was right, and I helped to arrange the poor fellow on the floor of the 'bus. I had a presentiment he was going, and I knelt by him till the 'bus was ready to start. He was struggling. A nice St. John's man who had been helping me was to accompany that load.

"I think he is beginning to die," I said; "couldn't we put him out and let him go in peace?"

The man bent over him.

"It looks like it," said he, "but we'd better take him."

Later on that same bearer came to me to tell me the man had died ten minutes after

the 'bus started. It seems a dreadful nightmare, the memory of these men tortured and suffering, British and Belgian; but all that day there was so much to do I could not grasp the horror of it. One load came in with a Belgian boy, quite young, with a broken leg; he was shrieking with pain. The doctor put it in splints; he wanted to give him morphia. I begged the boy to have morphia, but he refused violently, and so with piercing screams and racking sobs of agony we had to load him on to a motor 'bus and let him go; his terror of morphia was greater than the agony he endured.

A gallant English marine was brought in with his jaw shot away and one arm pierced; he was quite conscious and must have suffered horribly, but he lay quiet, with never a murmur. They were all heroes; they would find time in the midst of their pain to say "Thank you, Sister," when I gave them something to drink or slipped cushions under them. Many a journey my little car made that day—filled each time. A big bread wagon came along and I commandeered it; the sergeant at first demurred, but he quickly

entered into the spirit of it. We spread a big blanket in a gateway and turned out all the bread. I climbed into the cart and passed the huge loaves out! Then I dragged the sergeant to an empty house, and we got mattresses and blankets and cushions, and made the bottom of that cart comfortable.

The doctor came along and was delighted. "That's splendid," he said; and soon we loaded in wounded and the cart went off.

All this time we were watching the signal to quit. If the artillery went down a certain road, we had to go. Troops were passing in all directions. Winston Churchill—then First Lord of the Admiralty—rushed past in a car many times with Colonel Seely, going backwards and forwards from Vieux Dieu to the trenches. For an hour and a half there came a lull, and lots of St. John's men and a few soldiers in khaki joined us. Suddenly a call came for a car to go to an outpost to bring in three wounded. It was a matter of four kilometres, and the road was being shelled all the way. Luckily my little ambulance was waiting, and off we went. There were one or two other cars on the road, and we passed an

open car with a stretcher slung across the back seats. We got to the outpost, a lonely building, and there was an Englishman with a little Belgian cap on his head! He was attached to the Belgian service: a brave man he was; I met him again and again, and always where there was danger, but he had no fear. We ran the car alongside, and then we all bolted for our lives round the corner of the house, and with an ear-splitting skirl a shell came on the roadway and ploughed a huge hole and brought a tree down. It stopped short of the car by less than a dozen yards. We waited quite a long time before the priest and the soldier who had gone to carry back the wounded appeared, and the Englishman showed me an enormous shrapnel case he was going to take away as a trophy.

When we drove back to the dressing station at Bucherout the St. John's men cheered, and one came up to me and gave me a pear. I wanted him to keep it, but he looked so hurt I took it and thanked him; then another man gave me an apple, which I put in my pocket. A soldier in khaki came up to me shyly with a little bunch of mignonette;

it almost brought tears to my eyes, for it suddenly made me think of a quiet garden with one corner overrun with mignonette, and my mother in a shady garden hat leaning on her stick, for it was her favourite plant.

In the evening our work grew lighter, and at last I myself stood on the footboard to accompany the last load in. The Belgian Military Pharmacy had arrived before I left—a big caravan drawn by two horses, and stocked with every possible medicament, also bandages and thousands of first field dressings. I had been busy interpreting too, for none of the doctors spoke French. Before I left I was commissioned by the Senior Medical Officer to get a complete list of all the British wounded in Antwerp, for no records had been kept ; they were put in all and any passing vehicles, and by them dropped at any hospitals in the town. It is true cars were given the names of the hospitals to go to, but these were often full, and the cars had to go on to others turn by turn till they could leave the men. My Belgian friend, the owner of the ambulance, undertook to get the returns for me ; and sure

enough next morning he had it all ready for me, and sorry I am I did not keep it!

We ran out early towards Bucherout, but what was my amazement to find Vieux Dieu deserted, the English headquarters empty, and shells bursting in the streets!

A big car with British staff officers came towards us and stopped, and I ran round and asked them whether Bucherout was still the collecting station, and where the wounded were. The man I spoke to first was very worried. He said he did not know where the wounded were; he added: "Go back at once; this is no place for an ambulance. The firing line is 200 yards from here."

The man opposite him, a clean-shaven, strong-faced officer, did not seem so agitated, so I appealed to him, but he knew nothing either. So we drove on to some Belgian soldiers we saw in the distance, and they said there must be wounded, but they didn't know where; anyway, the road wasn't too dangerous if mademoiselle stayed behind!

Mademoiselle laughed and went on; and there was Bucherout, so busy yesterday, deserted!—not a sign of life, nothing but two

black dogs who came to me for sympathy. There, too, we met a little group of marines wheeling a wounded Belgian in a barrow; they had stopped to replace the bandage on his leg, which had got swamped with blood. I jumped out, and one sailor said to the man who was bandaging, "Let Sister do it."

They were a very forlorn little band—had no idea where they were going nor where Antwerp lay, and knew no French. They had saved six stretchers, which I slung upon the roof of the car. I told them the way (straight forwards) and one boy—he was perhaps seventeen—said to me, with a quiver in his voice, "We couldn't help it, Sister; we had to go. We were shot down and couldn't help ourselves; we had no guns."

It was the first time I heard that pathetic cry—"We had no guns." The next day and the next, and for many a week afterwards, I was to hear it—the unspoken lament, the mute reproach; and many a time when wounded men have turned to me for strength, and dying men have held my hand in an anguished farewell to life, and women have clung to me sobbing, and I myself have felt

courage and hope and faith break within me over the cold faces of the best-beloved and the nearest of kin, these words have leapt to life again and struck me across the eyes—"We had no guns."

What happened to the Belgian in the barrow? He was helped inside the ambulance, and we ran further on to look for wounded. We met a few Belgian soldiers—fourteen, I think—and they were all excited, and some had held to their rifles and some had thrown them away, and one, a non-commissioned officer, told us a long tale. He spoke of the English who had come to save Antwerp; he spoke of these men in their trenches and the great German guns that swept them like a scourge. He spoke of the Marine Light Infantry, and the handful of them that started to charge the German guns across three miles of country, and he even muttered something of the harvest these guns reaped—because the English had no guns. Then he ended up with the tale of the English throwing down their cartridges and rifles. . . . Retreat is an ugly tale to hear—an uglier thing to come to grips with. My chauffeur tried to check the narrator, and

tried to show his sympathy with me. He had seen me come tearless and dry-eyed from many a pitiful sight—he had been with me when death seemed certain—so now he turned away from the suffering in my eyes and the mist that would blot everything else out.

Then came the wounded—four of them—and a man who spoke of Englishmen in a trench with no one to help them, and he wanted to go to English headquarters to tell them where to send help ; so back we sped, and stopped to take up one marine to look after their stretchers.

Later on we ran out another road to the Château de Troyenhem, and near here we found an English doctor with everything ready. He was calm and confident, and quite amazed to think outside help was offered him ! His preparations were complete—his " dug-out " shelters shell-proof ; he was very confident. Yet next day he was gone, and only his shell-proof shelters remained for the Germans ! So back we went to Vieux Dieu, and there found English soldiers and sailors making trenches and building a big barricade across the road to Bucherout. The chauffeur looked

ahead and asked if mademoiselle were afraid to go. Mademoiselle said there was no question of fear, but of wounded; if there were wounded the car must go. And so it went, and inside I cast a frantic look back at the khaki and bluejackets—there I felt lay safety. Then overhead the singing filled the air—Whizz-zz-zz . . . boom. . . . Whizz-zz . . . boom . . . ei-ei-ei-ei-yah; and I felt so lonely. I crouched down in a corner, and then I wrote a note on a slip of paper with my mother's address on it and slipped it into my tunic pocket; and then I knelt down and prayed, and with the prayer my imagination lost its force, and I could look calmly out on the bare road, and not feel desolate, because there was no other living thing there. The dead horses were sad, and at Bucherout the houses battered and fallen, were sad; and I called and whistled and searched for the two black dogs, but got no reply.

We drew up for a few minutes. The intense stillness was rather terrifying, and I think our nerves were strung up, for a whizz of shrapnel that came very close made us jump violently, and my companions bolted like

RUINS OF A CHURCH.

WHERE A BOMB FELL.

rabbits and crawled under the back of the car ! I followed them blindly, but there was no room for me ; I could only crouch down, wondering what was going to happen. Then the crash of falling masonry at very close quarters relieved the tension, and up we got, and I think the chauffeur broke all speed records on that return trip ! It was a wonderful thing to get back inside that barrier, to run in with only a quarter-inch to spare between sandbags piled high, and the moment we were through to see that gap filled up. I reported to the medical officer there, and he took me to his " hospital " in the fort—great stone cellars they looked like, all these rooms so carefully guarded with the earth all round them.

The doctor had no dressings (someone had forgotten to supply them !), and so I sent my car in to Antwerp with a chit to get more dressings from the Belgian Red Cross. Also I gave the chauffeur all the money I had with me, and told him to bring white bread and butter and cheese ; then I was offered some sandbags for a seat, and watched the men building. That was interesting and amusing.

There were Belgian soldiers who stood round watching the British building and strengthening the barrier; then a Belgian sergeant came and ordered them to take bags and build too. Some of them smiled; some of them winked at each other. One man winked at me, as much as to say, "Our brave sergeant; he's showing off!" The sergeant seized bags himself and swung them into place. Outside the ever-growing barrier a marine officer was directing his men. He was swinging the heavy bags into place himself—pointing out weaker places; he was a good officer. Once he paused to wipe the perspiration off his brow, and leaned against the wall of sandbags, and, so leaning, discovered me watching him. His eyes opened wide. Doubtless in his heart he said "What the devil is a woman doing here?" but he merely smiled and saluted.

I, too, swung a sandbag into place—laid one tiny bit of the wall that was to keep the Germans out—but did not. Along to the left the marines and the Naval Brigade were toiling, making beautiful roofs to their trenches—dragging heavy wooden beams into place,

and on them supporting hundreds of sandbags and big sods of earth. Soon the trench became like a long hut—comfortably screened from rain and wind, and shell-resisting. For hours they worked, these big, strong men of ours, all looking good-tempered and jolly. Close to and behind one end of the trench were two stone houses, high and narrow, and towering over the barriers. I asked one of the officers if they were going to blow them up, remarking that if a shell hit them they would collapse in the trench and kill the men there.

He absolutely exploded :

" We have been asking all day to have that house taken down—and we can't."

" Why not ? " I asked, astonished. " Can't you do it ? " (He wore three stars.)

" No, it's all red tape ; a fussy old staff officer came along and said they were not to be touched."

Instance of red tape that made me gasp at such a time. Never had I realised what victims it claims ; and that evening, when I left these particular forts, I was witness of another distressing example of it. The same old " fusser " came along and ordered all the

splendid roof to be taken off the trench; the protection these men had worked hour after hour to build was condemned because the supports were solid tree trunks (all the material available) wedged in with sandbags and earth; and the text-book said *iron* supports should be used, as wood might catch fire! My heart ached for them; it was already dusk, and instead of warm covered trenches they would have to pull down their sheltering roof and live in the open trench, for there was no iron to be got. The men were disheartened and furious, and many a curse fell on that staff officer's head, and personally I think he deserved them.

However, to return to the earlier hours of the afternoon.

My chauffeur returned armed with loaves and two huge cheeses and butter, and a big sealed drum of sterilised dressings. The doctor loaded up some men with the food, and I carried a big cheese, and we made a quaint procession following the winding footway that led through wire entanglements to a narrow plank bridge and so into the fort itself.

When I got back one of the young naval

division stretcher-bearers came to me. It was the same boy whom I had met near Bucherout —with the little party who had lost their way and had the Belgian in the barrow. He explained on behalf of the little band that they had no rations, as they belonged to —— Company, which they could not find, and were now with —— Company (one being "Collingwood" and one "Drake"), and so, as only strict rations were issued, they had no food. He was a nice lad; I hope he got safely through what followed.

Whilst all this work was going on the blue sky above was very peaceful, and up there floated placidly a large captive balloon, furnished with a wireless telegraphy apparatus. The Germans were calmly surveying all the English preparations, and sending down to their artillery the new range of distance! I demanded to know why we couldn't shoot the balloon or send an aeroplane to attack it and drop bombs on the German guns, but was told all the Allies' aeroplanes had left for Ghent two or three days ago, to avoid possibility of capture!

Suddenly about 5 o'clock a new noise made

itself heard—a deep boom-boom; this was the one and only Long Tom, which had been out of action since 5 o'clock in the morning owing to the cement having given way.

Shortly after this I left with a young Naval Brigade officer carrying despatches for the Commodore. Running through Vieux Dieu, we were stopped by a mob of people—weeping women and gesticulating men. Two poor women were alone in their house, and a man had started looting it, a rough civilian of the working class. Heedless of the two women, he carried chairs and clocks and wine from the house to a little cart. A few yards farther on some soldiers and some civilians were drinking coffee and beer outside a little restaurant. We stopped whilst the owner of the ambulance scolded the thief, comforted the women, fetched two soldiers from their coffee to guard the house, and handed the man over to their charge. About two miles beyond we met a Belgian regiment bivouacking for the night, fetched the commandant, drove him back with two military policemen; he arrested the looter, ordered him to be shot,

and returned with us to his regiment. At last we arrived at the Commodore's head-quarters. The gallant despatch-bearer had told me a moving tale of his long day without food, and I had proudly presented him with a pear which a St. John's man had given me the day before and which I had kept for emergency; also I found a last scrap of chocolate. I forgot to tell him I had had one slice of plain bread and a chunk of cheese since 8 o'clock that morning, nor did he ask. True he was a little reluctant to take the pear, and ate the chocolate slowly without undue display of hunger.

When, therefore, he had disappeared up the long dark avenue with his despatches, I stamped about the road to keep warm, and then saw a light in what seemed a cottage in the grounds. I hesitated, then went boldly in, and knocked on the door to ask for a cup of hot coffee for the poor lad when he came out. To my astonishment, a big bluejacket appeared, and was as delighted to see me as I was surprised to see him. He overwhelmed me with offers of chicken broth, but I begged for a cupful for my despatch bearer; however,

I was induced to accept coffee and biscuits, and thankful I was to have them. I was taken into a parlour with what had once been beautiful furniture, and whilst I was having my coffee a sturdy, sailorly-looking man came in, and we chatted. He was full of an expected division that must have taken the wrong roads, and looked worried to a degree. Then he retired, and I curled up on a sofa in a corner, feeling terribly sleepy and tired ; in fact I was just dropping off to sleep when an aide-de-camp entered. We had a long talk, and amongst other things I told him of the despatch-bearer's long day without food, and to my surprise (also relief) I learnt that the starving officer had already been for lunch at headquarters at noon ! He entered himself after long delay, and felt rather shamefaced, I think, about his little desire to appear a romantic figure suffering pangs of hunger. He was very young, and I chuckled over his discomfiture many a time.

Meantime the aide-de-camp had entrusted me with his sword (for repairs), and armed with it I clanked back to the ambulance, where the chauffeur was much impressed by

my appearance with the wonderful sword at my side.

(He returned to his *confrères* later with a great tale of his English miss, who had been presented with a sword for her gallantry ! ! !)

After reconducting our naval officer to his fort, we returned to Antwerp, and I swung into the hospital with great swank—sword clanking ! To my dismay, appeared the head doctor.

" Oh, Miss So-and-So ; take off that sword ; we mustn't have weapons in a hospital ! "

I gasped, and quickly explained I was only in charge of the sword.

However, to return. After supper I was filling some big jugs of water for the night nurses from the well (the waterworks having been shattered a few days earlier when Walhem was taken), and a young officer of the Garde Civique was helping me. To him I mentioned that the people whose hospitality I had enjoyed all the time I was in Antwerp had left, and I had nowhere to go for the night. He promptly fetched his mother, who lived two doors away, and with whom another nurse was billeted, and she begged me to sleep in their cellar, which was furnished as a

bedroom. I accepted gratefully, and retired there about 10 o'clock, very weary. After the usual " indaba " with my hostess and her family, I washed in the kitchen sink, and got into bed and wrote up my diary. That took some time, and as midnight was striking I closed it, turned off the electric light (which was actually in the cellar), and was snuggling down in my pillows, when, *whizz-zz-zz . . . boom*, came the first shrapnel over Antwerp.

CHAPTER III

ANTWERP—THE BOMBARDMENT AND FLIGHT

THAT was a terrible night. For two and a half hours we worked carrying men downstairs—the top floor first, with its 69 beds to clear (for that night there were extra beds in the corridor), then the second floor, and lastly the fracture wards on the first floor, though to me that seemed a mistake. It was down slowly with a heavy stretcher, and up rapidly with an empty one. I made slings for myself with a bandage, but even then my wrists and legs ached after the first ten men.

One dresser I helped time after time—I think we two carried down 30 cases alone. Into one ward on the second floor I went to see if I could help, but found the London surgeon (who did all the worst operations there) with another doctor and two dressers in consultation over a very bad case. I turned to go out, when the great man saw me and called

cheerily: "Ah here's Miss So-and-so; *now* we'll be all right!"

I swallowed a lump in my throat; at that time when I was alone a friendly greeting meant very much to me.

Down below, the scene was a terrible one. The kitchen was in the basement, also many offices (scullery, wash-place, passages), and these were now a mass of helpless men—some on mattresses, some on rugs—all exhausted with suffering and want of rest, racked by the pain of their wounds, but brave as the gods of old.

No murmurs, no complaints — although many a broken cry for water made one's heart ache. One poor sailor lay on the landing of the staircase to the basement; he had had an eye shot out and was half delirious, and his cry for water was very pitiful. Another man, very badly wounded in the side, caught my eye: he was lying on the stone floor with no mattress; I got him some cushions. One man with broken legs yelled with pain as we lifted him on and off the stretcher. Some of the men tried to cheer the others up. Gradually the lights were lowered and the stretcher-

bearer's work finished, and I slipped upstairs and brought a mattress down for the man with the bad wound in the side.

Upstairs coffee and bread and treacle were going ; and most comforting it was. Then the hospital showed a strange sight. Down in the entrance hall lay silent figures. On a bench behind the door sat a doctor and the sister-in-charge : the steps were crowded with doctors, dressers, and nurses, all huddled together, with a few patients in between. Outside there was a clear moon and pure air, and outside I went with my burberry on, dragged a wooden bench to the middle of the courtyard, and lay down. Whizz-z-z . . . boom. At steady intervals came the shrapnel through the air, cutting the silence like a knife—once or twice coming so near I leapt up and ran to the wall, crouching down with bitten lips. Then back to the bench. Dr. Hoyle came out with blankets ; but the horror of dirt was more to me than the cold of the night, bitter though it was, and, finding me set on this point, he kindly fetched newspapers and spread them over me. As he was talking the night sister joined us ; she sent me out

her own big coat to cover me. It was very good of her. Once she came out with a utensil in her hand, and called a greeting to me, when the whizz-z-z came between us, and she dropped her china and we met under the shadow of the wall, both breathing rather hard.

"Why don't you come in?" she pleaded; "it's awful being alone out here."

But I shook my head obstinately. If I were to die, I would rather it were outside, with God's moon to bear me company.

I closed my eyes resolutely and tried to sleep—tried, at least, to control myself and not run to cover. One shrapnel—two, three, eight, nine, ten. I began to feel proud of myself when eleven came; the loud hissing of it seemed to go through my brain. In wild, unreasoning terror I bolted to the wall and crouched there, holding my breath, praying madly; and the great boom was followed by an appalling crash—part of the house next door had gone. Several people came to look out—Dr. Hoyle to see if I was safe, Nurse Mitchell and Sir Bartle Frere to discuss the damage; and with the last two I went upstairs

to the very top floor, and there, by climbing a long ladder, we could see out of a skylight, one at a time. It was a weird sight. Dawn was coming—very slowly—and here and there broken laps of flame told that some shells had found a mark. Housetops everywhere, and a few heaps of broken masonry (not many), and the great, quiet sky, and the whizz-z-z . . . boom as a shrapnel sped overhead on its deadly errand.

I was not sorry to climb down and return to my bench in the yard. About 4 I went in and lay on a sack of potatoes behind the front door,—the night sister's coat over me, Dr. Hoyle, big and kind and protecting, sitting on the bench; but sleep was not for that day! Soon the sounds of hurrying footsteps drew us to the door. Men and women were passing carrying odd bits of furniture and little bags of clothing. Two men passed, carrying a little girl in a chair. Three women passed, sobbing, a bundle tied up in a tablecloth in their hands. The day was come—this strange day of terror!

Very early an Irishwoman attached to the hospital and a Miss —— prepared to go; they had motor cars. They offered to take two

nurses ; only one said she would go, and she was suffering from a long strain. They took two English officers who were wounded, and insisted on one of them leaving his revolver behind—the other had none—professing to be afraid the Germans would catch them and shoot them all if they had firearms on board !

I got an early message from the house next door to remove my sword ; the people indeed offered to bury it in a rubbish heap with the Garde Civique uniform belonging to the son of the house ! He was very much perturbed about his future. I urged him to enlist ; I urged his duty to his country—vengeance on the Germans. His parents urged his duty to them (they had four sons) and would give none of them to fight for their country.

Events followed fast. Mrs. St. Clair Stobart and her secretary came down to ask for help in getting away : they had 40 patients in a convalescent home at the top of the boulevard. Lots of wounded came in—one man a horrid sight of burns and blood, his face practically gone ! The man who brought him in said there were crowds of wounded and no one to bring them in. It was already long past the

LIFE IN THE FRONT LINE.

DIVISION BEING REVIEWED ON ITS RETURN FROM THE TRENCHES.

hour for my ambulance to come for me, so I walked down to the Place de Meir to the Belgian Red Cross headquarters. The streets were empty. Once I passed some weeping women beside their house, of which two storeys had fallen in, and I had to whistle to myself and hum snatches of a song as I walked to keep my courage up, and every shrapnel that whizzed over my head made me wonder if anyone would find me if I got knocked out then. It was a weird walk, and one I have no longing to repeat, although I wish sometimes I had been more observant of the damage wrought around.

At last I reached my goal, but found hardly a soul there—only an *ambulancier* I had already met, who wrung my hand, muttering "Bonne chance, mam'selle," and dashed out. Nobody knew of the car, the owner or the chauffeur, and as the committee-room door was open and the president and two other members were there, I asked them. As I went out, with a message to take back to the hospital, the London surgeon and the hospital head walked in, and as I stopped to scribble a message on a sheet of paper, a terrific crash

outside smashed all the windows. I hurried to look out; a shell had killed two people. At that instant the three members of the Belgian Red Cross walked out and vanished, and the two English doctors called to me to jump into their car to return.

With them I went to the English headquarters, and later to the hospital, entrusted with the fact that three motor 'buses were to come for the wounded and three of the nurses and a doctor. I took it on myself, therefore, to slip up to the top floor and pack boxes full of dressings and bandages, scissors, and other necessaries.

The first detachment was leaving in charge of an American doctor, and to him I entrusted my suit-case, as everyone expected a "*Sauve qui peut*" later. I took my precious charge the sword out also, but to my amazement a general outcry was raised, and the doctors and nurses would not hear of a sword going. However, I felt I should lose it if I kept it, so I wrapped it inside the Union Jack and so carried it out to one of the 'bus drivers, a sailor, giving him a few shillings to see it through!

It got to England long before I did, but my

suit-case got lost, with many valued possessions.

Later on four other motor 'buses came, thanks to the efforts of Dr. B——, and into these the poor sufferers were crammed; and on the tops a few patients and all the doctors and nurses had seats. The chauffeur of a gallant Englishwoman who had done a lot of splendid rescue work round Antwerp helped me to break into the store cupboard and pack boxes of provisions—simply because it seemed nobody's business to see to it!

Off we started, and stopped outside Mrs. Stobart's hospital to offer help, but it was empty—not a soul was left; and then, dodging the broken electric wires of the tramway which were hanging across the road in places, we went slowly through the deserted streets. Every window was shut and barred; here and there a stolid woman would watch us pass, a child raise its hand in greeting.

Down by the *quai* the crowd was appalling—men and women and children; 'buses, carts, barrows, *limousines*, taxicabs marked "Service Militaire" or protected by Red Cross flags: everywhere people pushing and shoving

or waiting stolidly; women sobbing and women calm and smiling; babies, dozens of them, piled on to carts and barrows—the parents doubtless somewhere in that dense throng of humanity. The guns were booming in the distance—shrapnel falling on the town. Thank God! they had not yet got the range of the *quai*—a shell falling in the midst of that crowd did not bear thinking of. Then at last, after an hour or an hour and a half of weary waiting, whilst officers restrained and controlled the people and kept their own irritation in check—and it must have been intense!—the order came to move, and slowly the four 'buses, packed with sufferers, rolled over the pontoon bridge, and all around the yellow sky and the setting sun seemed to cast a halo on the forsaken town. It was then that Sir Bartle Frere, who shared the back seat of the 'bus with me, rose.

"I can't leave Antwerp like this," he said, and went down the steps slowly.

"Good luck!" I called; and

"Good-bye!" he responded.

Miles and miles of long roads, and hunted, weary people staggering along; bundles of

goods, carts with chairs and tables !—all their humble and valued possessions ; little children trying to keep up, their eyes big with fear, their little legs weak with walking—how one's heart ached for them ! And suddenly behind us a great sheet of flame lit up the dusk—the petrol tanks were ablaze.

Gradually the night darkened and the cold became bitter to a degree. It was early in October, and I had hastened to Antwerp from a hot country with very little clothing. I ached with cold and with sitting erect on that little narrow seat. A Scotch boy-dresser had taken Sir Bartle Frere's place ; we had a blanket apiece, so we sat on one and held the other over us round our necks ; but the blankets were thin, and it got colder and colder.

One nurse broke into helpless sobbing ; she had gone down earlier to help the nurse inside with the wounded. She was a brave and splendid woman, and this was our second night without sleep, and the days had been filled with hard work. Every now and then the 'bus would stick in the mud ; often we had all to get down and shove to get it out of the ruts, and the jolting and jarring were terrible.

One patient in the 'bus in front, a young Flemish boy, screamed with agony, moaning and yelling ; that in itself was nerve-racking. A man was propped up against the windows of the 'bus, his head rolling from shoulder to shoulder with the rough motion ; he had been trepanned two days before.

Once we stopped, and I helped an American nurse and two others to get hot water and make soup by throwing dozens of tabloids into huge cans of hot water ; and a Frenchwoman, whose husband was a Belgian, made tea. Every man had a drink. It was St. Nicholas. One man was dead, but for some reason the doctor in charge of that 'bus refused to let his body be handed over to the Belgian regiment in the town. The nurse refused to travel with a corpse, and so another nurse was put in beside the body, being left to discover the ghastly truth after the start. To me that always stands out as a needless piece of cruelty.

So the long night went on, endless and terrible : the cold was bad enough, but the jolting and jarring seemed worse, and sleep was impossible. I turned to the boy beside me,

whom I scarcely knew, and said I must put my head on his shoulder. I was too tired to feel almost; and I was strong, very strong. What that night of hell meant to some of the nurses and to the wounded God alone could witness. Better to let the veils of silence drop. . . . To me in the past War had meant romance and heroic deeds, not the awful hell of agony it is.

CHAPTER IV

GHENT—ARRIVAL: HOSPITALS AND HOSPITALITY: FLIGHT, RETURN, AND THE "BOCHES"

THE grey light of dawn had scarcely broken when the heavy 'buses rolled into Ghent, and so along endless streets of tall, narrow houses with shuttered windows to the Hotel Flandria, an auxiliary hospital opposite the big station of St. Pierre. Here the doctors arranged for twelve of the wounded to be taken out, the wounded officer particularly, as there were English doctors and nurses attached to this hospital with ambulance cars. Whilst they were unloading, a London hospital nurse and myself found the kitchen and a big pan of hot milk, and, securing a few cups, we made the round of the 'buses. In No. 1 'bus was a terrible scene—every man was livid, with a drawn face, and lines of agony were stamped

on every mouth. Yet when we held out the first cup of hot milk and I offered it to a young English boy of eighteen, who had been one of the cheeriest and pluckiest in the whole hospital, he twisted his mouth into a smile and said : "Give it that chap up there, Sister, he needs it more."

And each man passed it on to his neighbour in misery. That boy's smile broke through my calm, and I was crying bitterly whilst we finished our round. My companion was the same ; it was one of the saddest moments in life.

Then the 'buses moved on to a big convent, and here 32 were unloaded ; six or eight of them were English, and the good nuns were at the door to welcome them, and us, with hot coffee and English tea !

It was indeed a comfort to be fed with hot, strong coffee by those gentle, kindly nuns, and when the mother superior asked for an English nurse to stay and help them, as they spoke no English and had no nurse amongst them, I held my breath in fear lest a trained nurse would offer to stay ; but none did, and I rushed to the reverend mother and begged

permission to remain. It was at once granted, and with a great joy in my heart I remounted the 'bus to go and find the doctor who had charge of my suit-case.

The next halt was at the Hospital Civile, a big forbidding-looking place, and here the remainder of the loads were deposited. Then the 'buses went to a café—a rendezvous; but here a sort of rush commenced, and at length, finding it hopeless to get any information, I took a cab and drove to the house of a Belgian doctor whose address had been given me.

To my relief Dr. Hoyle was expected there for breakfast, and the doctor's wife, who spoke English well, made me come in and wash, and was very kind to me. Dr. Hoyle appeared later, but not my suit-case, which had been sent in error to Bruges and then to Ostend. However, it was a pleasure to see the good doctor himself, and he tried hard to persuade me to go on with them. At last he left, and Madame —— and her daughter offered to take me back to the convent. They did so, calling at the English Consul's *en route* to tell him where I was and that there were English wounded

there. His daughter was much interested, and promised to come and see us. I was more than half asleep when I reached the convent door; it had been a long walk, and after two days and two nights of excitement and no sleep I felt very near the end of my tether. Above all things I longed for a hot bath, but though that was impossible, it was a luxury to get off my clothes and tumble into bed. I slept at once, and an hour later a nun came hurrying to waken me.

The motor 'buses were at the door taking away the English patients!

I dressed hurriedly, but I was too tired to be very quick, and stumbled downstairs to find the 'buses had gone, taking all the English but three!

I was at once called upon by the doctor, who had just arrived, to get the dressing-wagon ready and go round with him. It took two hours to do the men. There were about 50, and some of the wounds of the new arrivals were in an awful state. The men themselves were worn out with the suffering of their night in the 'bus and the sleepless night of the bombardment. The doctor was

very capable, and extremely clean in his methods. There was a bevy of fair lady helpers to accompany us, and they all had special duties allotted them. One very pretty girl had to hold the patients' hands and head and fondle them to take his mind off the pain of his dressings. One held the bowl of swabs, one the pail for dirty dressings, etc., etc., and not one of them was allowed to touch the dressings and bandages prepared for use. This was my work, and I had to undo all the dressings and syringe the wounds that required it, etc.

I had lunch with a little Belgian girl, whose relatives were all killed at Louvain, and she had been in Antwerp some weeks at the hospital there. She was a good little worker, and was very helpful. After lunch I had to take temperatures, etc., at the doctors' special request, as he was returning at 3 o'clock. However, it was 5 when he came, and many of the dressings had to be done again. At 6.30 I got permission to go to Madame —— to see if my bag had arrived. There were lots of English soldiers at the Gare St. Pierre, and in the streets people ran to offer them chocolates

and cigarettes and fruit. . . . It was told me as a fact that when the English marched in to Ghent the poorer people gave the soldiers all they could to eat and drink, and spent all their ready money for the purpose.

I had supper at 7.30, and fell into bed more dead than alive, but even then burnt my candle low jotting the events of the day in my diary in case of forgetting what occurred ; and so, very wearily, I went to sleep. The tiny cubicle amongst a dozen others was a haven of peace, and I had slept perhaps an hour and a half or two hours when cries awoke me. I leapt out of bed, slipped on my coat, and blindly groped my way to the place from whence the noise came. My head was confused—my brain a mass of chaotic thoughts ; in another cubicle I found a big figure in white groaning and stamping and yelling. To me came the thought it was strange to have a wounded soldier amongst the nun's cubicles, and then that this was a thief . . . or a German. . . . I seized the figure and pushed it on to the bed, and wondered vaguely if I could overcome it or if I would be killed ; and suddenly the mists of sleep cleared away

and I realised it was a woman and she had cramp in her leg. I knelt beside her and rubbed, rubbed with a sort of hopeless energy, wondering a little bitterly if I would ever get a night's sleep again, for that night, an hour earlier, a messenger on horseback from the medical officer of the English division had brought a note for me, and heard with surprise I was in bed; but the nun brought up the note, and that was about 10, and I was awakened then to read it. The outcry had at length awakened the rest of the sleepers, and the good woman's maid appeared, and I left her to rub and slipped back to bed, falling asleep to the sound of voices crying:

"Qu'est-ce que c'est donc!"

"Mon Dieu! qui arrive . . ."

Morning came, and I was duly called at a quarter to 6! The morning was a busy one—the dressings took a long time. Every quarter of an hour one of the English sailors sent for me to ask "if his girl would look at him now he'd lost an eye." Poor soul! it was he who sat on the staircase at Antwerp all that night of bombardment, suffering from thirst as well as physical agony.

That afternoon I had an hour off and went to the "Government House," the headquarters of the English division. There I left a note and there I saw lots of our men—big and strong and confident; it is wonderful the moral effect conveyed by a big Englishman in khaki. . . . I returned to the convent feeling less lonely, and no longer a waif in a foreign town.

When I returned I found that the erysipelas case was to be moved at 8 o'clock, and as no one but myself was allowed to touch him, I got him ready and waited. . . . Nine o'clock came and 10 o'clock, and still he was not fetched. At 10.30 we got a man who knew something of first aid (or said he did) to go out and make inquiries. At 11 o'clock a van with one horse came. The driver refused to touch the stretcher or help in any way—he was afraid of infection; and so, with the first-aid man to help me, I had to get the poor fellow on to the stretcher and carry one end myself and lift the stretcher into the van. The nun on night duty came to help, but her long sleeves and cloak made it difficult for her to come near. The poor fellow had 105 degrees of fever, and it was a very cold night, but

orders had to be obeyed! (He was returned a few hours later, as the fever hospital would not take him in!) Then I had to swab all the bed and the floor with disinfectant and put the sheets, etc., into solution. It was 1 o'clock when I got to bed.

Next morning was Sunday, and I rose at 5.30 to go to mass. It was a moving sight. I knelt in the background in my khaki with the nuns and the wounded who were able to get up. . . .

Unfortunately for my chance of breakfast, the doctor had gone to mass also, and I was at once requisitioned to start work. He was quite annoyed because the temperatures were not taken! And then we started at once on the dressings. Then one of my Englishmen had to be prepared for an operation, and was taken away in a horse van, and it was 11 o'clock before the doctor took his departure and I could go and get some breakfast. Later on in the afternoon the consul's daughter called, and when she heard how difficult it was to get anyone for night duty she offered to come on, if her people would consent, and let me go to bed.

SHELL IN CANAL.

THE MORNING WASH.

So I got permission from the reverend mother to go out with her. She took me to the Flandria Hotel first to see the English wounded there, and she made inquiries for the officer we had brought from Antwerp. It was then a little lady with St. John's Association badges met us, and she told us gently she was then in charge for the afternoon of the officer in question, and he was far from well. We had an interesting chat; she was a novelist whose name is well-known, and she made a note of my name and promised to come to the convent and see my wounded. (She came sooner than either of us dreamt!) Then when we reached the consulate, and Miss Lethbridge explained the situation and that she would gladly come for the night, their telephone bell rang. It was an order from Ostend that the consul was to leave at once.

I returned to my convent and told the reverend mother what had happened, for many wild rumours had been abroad all day. Later on that evening the little lady from the Flandria appeared. . . . It was late and very dark, and the streets were lonely, but she had come herself to tell me her party were leaving

before dawn and would take me and my English wounded at her request. It was very good of her to think of a stranger, and I explained to the reverend mother. Already we had had orders for all the Belgians to go at 8 o'clock in the morning!

So then I helped one of the nuns to make little bundles of all the available clothes, and I warned the stronger of the two Englishmen to be ready; the other man was bad and had to get medicine every hour, so the other Englishman lent me his watch to keep me right. I was sitting there in the dim light with all that ward of suffering men—some of them groaning, some snoring, some twisting and turning. Then of a sudden one poor fellow took a bad attack of pain, and I was attending to him when outside came the heavy tramp, tramp of hundreds of feet. . . . The man near me fell to the floor in a dead faint. I lifted him up and put him on his bed and hurried out to call the nun. We had rather a job getting him settled, and ever outside went that tramp, tramp, tramp.

As soon as I could in decency I rushed to the next room (the surgery), threw open the

window, and leant out into the night. Dimly could I discern the moving mass, the seemingly endless throng, and the heavy tramp, tramp, tramp drowned my cry of "Good luck, boys," for all my soul seemed drawn from me. So the English army marched from Ghent. . . . The tramp died away in the distance—I still stood there; but of a sudden I felt desolate and very much alone, and because such thoughts are not good I shut the windows and returned to the ward.

It was an hour or two later when Miss Sinclair came with her car. The nuns were very sad; and I, too, felt my heart heavy, for they had been the kindest of friends, and I loved them. One of my men was dressed in white flannel trousers, a khaki tunic, and a khaki cap, and he moved us to laughter even then by his solemn anxiety. . . .

"I came here a sailor and I'm going away a soldier," he remarked gruffly. "Funny, ain't it?"

Outside the Flandria other cars were loading, and at last we started. There were four or five other women in the car and two men, and I tried to keep awake, but to no purpose.

The narrow seat, the hard bar where I rested my head, the intense cold, were barriers to sleep, but Miss Sinclair put a blanket round me and drew my head to her shoulder, and then I knew no more. Discomfort and cold and fatigue vanished, for I had the gift of the gods—sleep.

I was wakened to descend on a road white with frost, and everyone went up to a house where a big fire burned in a comfortable English-looking room. Beds were offered to the ladies ; but they were a democratic crowd, and chauffeurs, doctors, a parson, and the women all sat round together. Someone made room for me close to the fire ; I felt dazed with sleep and cold. Miss Sinclair seemed to be in great distress ; she was half-crying. A handsome woman was fiercely arguing some point with her. It appeared that they had left an English officer in Ghent, at the Flandria, as he was too ill to move. I went outside and was joined by Miss Sinclair and the parson, and to them I explained I was going back to Ghent to try and find the officer, who was dying, and to stay with him till the end. They tried to dissuade me, as I would have to go alone.

Miss Sinclair and the young clergyman walked beside me until we came to a station, and there I learnt a train for Ghent was due. The two of them saw me off. Poor Miss Sinclair was terribly upset, and was very sorry she was not a trained nurse, as if that had been the case she would have returned also. The frost was intense and the country white. I walked up and down the dirty match-strewn compartment to keep my temperature and courage up. The guard came, and laughed when I owned I had no ticket; he wanted to warn me Ghent was already full of Germans.

"Go back, mademoiselle," he said. "The 'Boches' are brutes; it is not for an English lady to go there now."

But when I told him there was an Englishman there badly wounded, tears came to his eyes, and he pressed my hand. Two old Flemish men came to offer me a big pear for "the devotion of the Red Cross."

At the station people were dashing about in wild confusion: many rushed up to me to ask if the English were coming back! Men and women and children were staggering

about carrying and dragging heavy trunks—the hated "Boches" were coming.

At the Flandria was wild confusion: people were packing rapidly. I got a doctor to take me to the poor English lad. He looked very white and tired, and wanted to know where "they" had all gone. He could not understand why nobody had washed him, nor why he was alone. It was hard work finding water, and the gas-ring to boil it on, and basins, cup, etc. The other bed in the room had to be made: all the adjoining rooms were in disorder and dirty. Once a Belgian girl looked in.

"Oh," she said, "you will stay with him! I am going; my father and my mother are ready." She tore off cap and overall and gave me them.

A kinder-hearted, more thoughtful patient I have never come across: he was a hero, this slip of a boy, wasted with suffering. I went to try and get a messenger to go to the convent to tell the nuns I was there. I met a man with a big beard, and asked him how I could send a message.

"I am not the porter," he said gruffly.

Shortly afterwards the same man entered the room.

"Oh," I said, "are you the doctor? I can find no charts nor treatment book. What does he get?"

"I am not the doctor," he replied shortly, and went away.

Then a Belgian lady came, and after asking her a question five times, I found she was deaf. She was very kind. As soon as I spoke through her trumpet she went to make arrangements. Then we carried the poor boy to a Belgian nursing home on a stretcher. It was a weary task, for the stretcher-bearers were not trained and wanted many rests. At last I took the front handles myself.

We went to the operating-room, and by this time I had broken down hopelessly, and when I found myself at a table with a cup of hot coffee I sobbed for sheer relief; and to crown all the wonderful comfort came another Scotch girl, a nurse in the home! In a haze of warm gratitude I saw a clean room, a comfortable bed; and I slept for four hours just as I was—tunic and belt and boots. I was wakened by a loud explosion, which

was said to be the Belgians blowing up a bridge.

Then a German regiment marched past—little men, all of them ; and I watched them in a fury of despair from the window. That night Germans were quartered on the home : they were quite civil, indeed two of them, common soldiers, went about on tip toe in the corridors when they heard there were "*malades*" there (they were not told there were wounded). The first two nights were rather nerve-racking, as I sat by my patient wondering if the Germans would come in and kill him. However, morning came and the next night passed. Then Death came bringing freedom in her hands, and after that a sad little ceremony on a wet, dismal day, and a gallant British officer was laid to rest unmolested by the enemy to the end. There was no Union Jack and no "Last Post," and only three nurses to lay him to rest and I to read the Burial Service, but his was a hero's death—gallant and patient to the end.

The Germans were rather astonished at my khaki uniform ; indeed, as I followed the coffin out we met a party of 18 Germans

coming in who were newly billeted on the home. One of them ran to inform his officer of my coming, and for a moment I feared a scene; but the officer saluted gravely, and I got into the carriage with the two nurses. We drove through lines of soldiers, and passed many regiments—well-fed, sturdy men, with brown stubby beards and little eyes.

Later that afternoon I drove to the German headquarters, having vainly appealed to the American consul and to the Spanish consul for assistance. The sentries at the gates eyed me with amazement, and the corporal of the guard came to ask my business and conducted me to the general. As he threw open the big glass doors into a sort of anteroom filled with officers, there was a dead silence for a moment. Every head turned towards me; for a moment I think they took me for a man. One or two saluted, and I saluted gravely and looked round for a likely interpreter. I had just caught the eye of a jolly-faced old general or colonel, with twinkly eyes, when a very dapper A.D.C. asked my business. I stated it quietly:

"I am English. The officer I have been nursing is dead; I want to return to England."

A little crowd gathered round me; they all spoke perfect English. They would not permit me to go. I must indeed go to Brussels, and from thence I would be sent to Germany, and perhaps from there to England!

I pressed the point: I was a nurse. I would not nurse Germans; I must go to England. They were polite and very sorry, but inflexible. I was ordered to present myself at 9 o'clock the following morning, and my papers for Brussels would be ready. One young puppy even warned me it would be a long walk to Brussels. I told them if they wished me to go to Brussels they would have to send me; for myself, I was going to England. So with many salutes we parted, and I swanked out through that courtyard filled with Germans as if khaki had never before been fittingly worn!

At 9 o'clock next day I breakfasted in bed; and at the same hour the day after I started for Holland, and England.

The Germans were friendly on the whole. A picket was drawn up by a sergeant to salute me. Sometimes the men made friendly remarks about the "worthy English Frau-

lieutenant." Once a man made rude remarks about the "English swine," and I told him off sharply and in execrable German threatened to report him! He took it meekly, and the Belgians round nearly embraced me. Once in a shop a German officer was buying a pencil and I a writing-block. The woman brought me one "made in Germany." I told her to take it away and see if she had English or Belgian paper, and then, as if by accident, knocked the offensive article on the floor. The officer went away without buying his pencil, and the good woman in the shop beamed with delight!

In other shops they would bring out their best for me, and ask if I were not afraid. Once I ran down the stairs of the home and came suddenly on a German sentry: his eyes bulged; he jumped violently and grabbed his rifle. I laughed aloud with great delight, and he got very red. He thought I was a man at first.

One night a big banquet was arranged for 150 German officers, but was cancelled owing to the death of General von Besslaer, who was shot through the right lung on the road to

Bruges when some of our infantry were hidden in a wood to stop the German advance.

What a blessed relief it was to leave the last German sentry behind and be greeted by the friendly Dutch sentries with smiles of welcome, and to unfurl the Belgian flag on our car! Ternhuisen was full of refugees from all parts, and many an interesting yarn went round the big table where everybody dined *en famille*. The little boat was well loaded, and there were two Englishwomen on board who were working amongst refugees in Holland. A Dutch officer asked permission to take my photograph, and he, too, had strange tales to tell. Since the war began the strangeness of truth over fiction has been demonstrated over and over again.

The crowds outside the steamer offices at Flushing were enormous. I managed to get there amongst the first six, and was given a ticket for England for next day's boat and a chit for a berth on board a refuge boat! I found I was expected to share a cabin with a fairly big boy and his mother; so I explored the boat, noted the number of a tiny cabin with one bunk in it, and went back to the

office, where they at once made the exchange for me. When the steward came on in the evening I got clean sheets from him—for, indeed, the sheets in use looked as if many a strange being had inhabited them!

I had supper at the only hotel—a poor meal for an exorbitant charge; and there again were crowds of homeless wanderers. One poor woman with a baby in arms had come from Hamburg. Her husband, a sea captain, was a prisoner, and she and her babe had been ordered on to the prison boat, where 70 men and 20 women were imprisoned. However, the American consul intervened on account of the child and got her away.

A St. John's nurse came to ask me something: she was there with wounded, and they had all slept in a hayloft for a week.

The morning came at last and the boat started; but never shall I forget the interminable weariness of that crossing. I suppose it was the reaction after the constant work, but as the hours went by I felt almost sick with the endless monotony of it all. People all talked to each other: many thought I was there, in case the boat might be submarined, to

render aid to the passengers. We caught sight of a torpedo and other boats, and once we had to stand-to whilst someone on a little minesweeper harangued the bridge through a megaphone. Then came Folkestone, and the dragging past of the hours until we got to Victoria. By this time I was in a fever of impatience, although none of my people were in England, only friends, to whose flat I hastened, and as I ran out of Earl's Court Station I wondered wildly if I would find them out; but that blow was spared me. As for them, they greeted me almost as one returned from the dead . . . and very pleasant it was!

And that was the first chapter of the war for me; and the second is, perhaps, stranger still, for Providence led my comrades and myself into as strange places as ever women went before. This at least the Great War has done—it has proved to men that women can share men's dangers and privations and hardships and yet remain women.

PART II

FRANCE

CHAPTER I

HOW THE CORPS CAME TO CALAIS

Out of the grey mists of the past rise shadowy forms that come and go—some have deeper tints and stronger outlines than others; all are shrouded in silence. These are the women who formed what we called in jest "The Band of Hope." For it was no light task to take from safety to a troubled land those who had not already been there. I myself came back purged temporarily by the pain I had witnessed—all selfish considerations swept away for the time by the sight of suffering; and I had a brief glimpse into the real glory of life—a life where money was not thought of, where the future lay in stronger Hands, and only the need of the moment could be considered. So it was that money and friends and love itself proved no bar, and away I went light-hearted, taking on me willingly the responsibility of eleven other beings,

mostly older, some younger, than I. Wise counsels of parents, the cautious teachings of friends, were listened to and lightly disregarded.

"Came the whisper, came the vision, came the power with the need,
And the soul that is not man's soul was sent us to lead."

Exactly seven days sufficed to order a Unic motor ambulance, watch it building, sell stock to pay for it, get the necessary permits, and leave England. With twelve pounds in the bank then, and no promises of work, no definite destination, we sailed from England merrily. It was even difficult to depart; obstacles blocked every step of the way—officialism, red tape, active enmity, all these had to be pushed aside; and infinite patience, much bluff and more blarney had to back up the steadfast purpose of our going.

What was the next scene! Calais the cruel, the pitiless; Calais swept by storms of rain and wind, cold and wet, and cheerless; the Calais along whose *quais* one never-to-be-forgotten night rows of wounded lay—in the

darkness, and the cold, and the rain. The wind was shrill and the heavens screamed their protest, but the great hotels remained closed; hospitals, with rows of beds and hot-water bottles, stood empty, the people slept in their warm beds and digested their heavy meals.

Yes, fathers of sons who were fighting, mothers of men who were wounded! they listened from their warm houses, and, perhaps, shivered at the howling of the wind; and along the *quai*, with sometimes a blanket to cover them, lay the heroes who had saved France. Hundreds of them came to Calais the cruel—men whose own country was lost to them; men whose mothers and wives and children had been murdered and outraged; Belgians who had been taken by surprise by a well-prepared foe and given their life and strength to keep that foe from seizing France. So the wind and the rain mourned over them, and with the dawn came English ships and doctors, and the 40 who had not the courage to deny to the wind and the rain the lives they had refused to the Germans were borne aside. As for the others—well, a few got

better. After all, this is only a little part of what war means.

There was a side-light on war, too. Shall I raise that veil also ? I remember two French *piou-pious* coming to tell me there were sick children down by the docks. I remember a little hut—a species of rough tram-shelter—where 30 women and children were striving to keep warm and dry round a little stove, and on the bare boards three tiny children lay flushed and fever-stricken. The eldest was possibly six : Belgian children are small for their age by English children. Her little eyes were very brilliant ; her cheeks burnt my hand ; her throat was horrible to examine. Her temperature was 104. The other two were not quite so bad—their temperatures were 102 and 102·2 ; and in a broken perambulator in the corner a babe of sixteen months had the same symptoms. It took us five minutes to clear that hut, open the windows, and get some air in to purify the place ; and then Nurse Jordan absolutely devoted herself to the children. Till 10 o'clock that night she swabbed their throats and tended them. My task was to get them taken to a hospital ; and I failed.

It is a memory that will never cease to rankle—it is a regret, a remorse, that will never cease to trouble my heart. It is true there were difficulties—would you believe them, I wonder? Listen ——

The people at the nearest hotel could not give any help: they knew of no civil doctors no fever hospital, no institution to help. . . . There was an English nurse passed across the *quai*, a woman with ambulance cars and orderlies to meet her. I told her of the children—the little children. She said she was here for wounded, and she passed by. . . . There were English officers—medical officers. I told them of the children—the little children. They asked with great superiority if I were there for the refugees. . . . My reply made them say they would see to it. Yes, they would see to it; and little children were lying on hard boards, with no milk and no pillows. We could only get *so* little milk. . . . There were others who sent me a message "to leave the children alone or I would get quarantined"; and we were there for the wounded. . . . Then came a Belgian general and a French officer, and to them at first the matter seemed of no import-

ance ; but by this time I was desperate, and they came to see for themselves. By this time also two of the others of our little band had spent two hours trudging through the streets and found a doctor. And all these good men promised to see what they could do ! Then came two other men—one a reporter to an English paper ; and they, too, undertook to " do something " to help. And meantime there were orders to go and transport wounded, and this we did, and after many journeys in the darkness and rain, our motor ambulance barged into a man with a hand cart, and broke our radiator and his cart. He himself escaped with a cut, and so it was very late before we had found a garage,—and returned on foot to the *quai*. It was 10 o'clock when we collected a cab and all our hand luggage, and Nurse Jordan and Nurse Dunn, both worn out by the long day and their efforts to help the children with scarlet fever. It was a struggle to go and leave these children alone with their mothers ; but we were very tired, and none of us had eaten since 12 o'clock midday, and so we went, the two nurses in the cab and the rest of us on foot tramping

through the wet endless streets to find our different billets. It was like a funeral. . . . The first billet was filled, but a kindly old man offered to put up one of us ; my brother was decided on. The next billet took two, the third took three, and the fourth drew blank, which left two out of a shelter—it was an empty house ! Then we got four into a billet for two, and three into another billet, and there still remained the three men of our party and myself. My billet was a single one, and I had left it to the end purposely, and arrived to find it filled by two men refugees. The old woman put her head out of the window and volubly explained the position, and in the end, relenting, offered to let me share her bed, which was a converted sofa in the back parlour of a tiny tobacco shop.

Weary as we were, we could still enjoy the situation, although it was now 11 o'clock. Then the old gentleman who had come to my brother's rescue said he would also find room for me. He was indeed a good Samaritan, for he piloted us all that evening. So we bade farewell to Elizabeth Smith (for such was the homely name of the French tobacconist) and trudged

along to deposit the two medical dressers. We rang the bell of their billet—no response; we rang, and rang; and gradually the truth came to us—it was another empty house! And again our good Samaritan rose to the heights and said he would somehow manage to put us all up.

So behold us arriving at his dear little home, with an anxious housekeeper suddenly confronted with four English strangers who were homeless. She too behaved "like a Briton," and I helped her to cut bread and butter and make coffee, and on that, and an apple each, we feasted royally. Bed was very welcome that night, and my passing regret for turning the good Samaritan out of his room was soon lost in the thoughts—tearful thoughts, I admit—of the little children who lay on bare boards, and even that passed swiftly into sleep.

We were early afoot next day, and early at the docks, but the hut was empty. The fever-stricken children had gone, with 600 fellow-creatures, aboard the refugee ship that had sailed for England.

Calais recalls another memory—another glimpse of the way we treat each other in

war time. We were still in our shelter of a glass roof and stone floor—the part of a disused corridor in the station waiting-rooms. We were making tea with a little spirit lamp, and in walked two men carrying a stretcher with a boy scout on it, and a woman walking with them who wore a Red Cross armlet and a white cap with a red cross on it. They laid the lad down and departed, merely stating he was ill and needed rest, that he had come on a boat from England. The boy seemed to be in a stupor—we could not diagnose it ; and there was no doctor to be got. We finished our tea (which was also supper) and asked the hotel people to take the boy in. Impossible ! —there was no place, but he must be moved. I examined his papers. He was a Belgian hero, decorated for taking prisoners, single-handed, three Uhlans. He was sixteen. His photograph adorned the front cover of the *Daily Mirror*. Two of us went to a Belgian boat, and there found the Red Cross armlet lady having a meal with the skipper. I told them we were bringing the boy on board for the night. Impossible ! Why ? There was no room. I looked round the empty boat. There

was no room for sick people. Not even for their own countryman—a boy, alone in a foreign country? No, not even for him. Then I do not know if my temper or my French was worse. Anyway, there could be no doubt left in either of their minds as to my opinion, and I asked that woman how she dared wear a red cross, and I ended by telling them they had refused shelter to a hero, honoured by their King for his bravery; and so I swung down their gangway mad with rage.

A Belgian officer had joined the group as I left. Then we went to the English ship and explained to the doctor, and he at once told us to bring him, and we carried him on board and left him; and as we passed the Belgian boat with the empty stretcher the officer and the woman called out: "We will take him; you can bring him now;" and with huge pleasure I hurled back at them: "You won't get him; the English will take care of him."

Then came our hospital of 100 beds, and the cleaning and the scrubbing, and the dying; and hardly were things in order when the typhoid scourge developed. From the first

we had two patients, and they grew to eight and to 20 and to 50, and Sister Wicks and her little staff were busy day and night fighting the worst fight of all—grappling with death at very close quarters, fighting against heavy odds; for milk and eggs were hard to get, and our Belgian adjutant had his work cut out to get supplies, and some days these supplies gave out. And there were other things to overcome—insanitary conditions and foreign prejudices. And in the other building a steady fight went on with wounds—ghastly injuries; and shortage of dressings and lack of instruments and a hundred and one odd things had to be thought of and appealed for and found. For ten days we had to cut sheets in half to have sheets for each bed; we had to wash shirts and socks and use them next day; we had to go on with the work when some were ill and the staff at a minimum, and all these first months we kept a dressing station going at Oostkirke, a mile behind the trenches.

Up there, little Walton, with her constant smile and little fragile face, stayed with another girl for a fortnight—sleeping on straw

by night, shelled out of the "Poste de Secours" by day, up to the knees in mud, going to and from the trenches, shrapnel bursting everywhere. Walton, Sayer, and Bond, they all went through it, and a Belgian girl was with us for a time. Some days we had no butter and plenty of bread; and we sent to Calais for butter: it came, tins of it, and we had no bread! Potatoes and black coffee were the staple items of diet, and "*plâtre*," a sort of bully beef in tins that we stewed and fried and boiled and made into potato mash. And once from the troop kitchen we got five packets of "Little Mary Custard Powder," and as milk was an unheard-of luxury, we made custard with water, and it tasted better than the best custard ever made at home!

It was a strange world—the world of men, where no women ever crossed our path, and where conventions had ceased to exist. Conventions indeed were unnecessary. Chivalry was the outstanding characteristic of the men, and up there alone in the midst of the Belgian army we were as safe as in a London drawing-room. One night there were only two "rooms" available, so on one side on straw we slept, and

on the other the doctors and their orderlies, and in the other room 40 soldiers spent the night. Up in the trenches it was amusing to see the utter unconcern of the men—their quiet drollery, their games of cards, their delight at getting newspapers, and there were several who used to fry potatoes in little pots.

Once it was most thrilling. Commandant T——, an officer who was promoted and got the Legion of Honour for an exceptionally brave deed, took us along his trenches. It was a lovely November morning, bright and clear, and more like a picnic than anything, and suddenly a hare crossed the ploughed field behind, and two soldiers jumped out and chased it with sticks and others threw stones, and everyone watched with laughter, and then the Germans recalled us to reality. Whizz-z-z . . . boom came the cloudballs of shrapnel, and the men were chased back to the trenches by the officers.

How well I remember it all, even now : the fields with the trenches thrown up, and the happy faces looking over—for the Belgian soldier is as gay as he is brave ; and here and

there in the earth, just above the trenches and very close to the edge, little wooden crosses caught the eye. Ahead of us lay more fields, and about 50 yards from us five figures lay, very still, with a queer contorted look. And in one corner was a farmhouse and an old mill where there were Germans, and that was why the five figures lay there unburied; it was death to go to them, for the guns from the farmhouse had the range—had tried it five times effectively! A doctor had braved the death that was certain, and returned unscathed, worming his way there and back, and with a clear conscience certified they were dead and beyond man's aid. Then the river went past, broad and blue, and sometimes dark things bobbed up and down, and through glasses one could see arms and legs and German uniforms. And beyond the river was an artificial bank, and there, entrenched, lay the enemy, and with the naked eye one could see them moving; and there were one or two scattered *and shattered* buildings to complete the picture, church towers that pointed to the Heaven we all professed to worship—the Heaven that heard the prayers

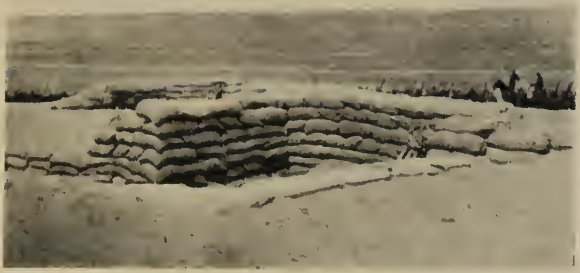
of Allies and enemies, and ordered all things as it thought best.

There is another picture of the trenches a week later. It was raining—hard, steady rain—and we had a long tramp ; the railway line was broken up with shell-holes and the fields were swampy. We scrambled along communication trenches and zigzag trenches. My field boots were lost in the mud, my skirt tucked up to my knees, and my buckskin breeches were soaked through at the knees with slimy, greasy mud. The trenches were closed up with straw and grass-sod roofs, and a wet and dreary officer welcomed us. He clapped his hands, and the grass-sod roofs were cautiously shifted a few inches, and out popped dozens of heads like rats in a hole. The cigarettes and shirts and socks brought shouts of delight, and grimy, happy faces peered at us curiously from the earthen burrows. From there we trudged along to a battery of artillery. They were so cold, poor fellows! standing about, soaked to the skin, with only mud to sit down on ; they had branches and bushes stuck on their guns to look like a line of trees from afar.

The day before a passing observation car had halted by our *poste*, and a red-headed kindly sailorman (with an Aberdeen accent that rivalled my own) had shared our simple meal of soup and potatoes. He had been so touched by hearing of our little bundles of comforts for the men he had torn off his own mittens and thrust them into my hands, saying: "They may keep some poor devil warm; I can get others." The point of this digression is that one gunner had hands purple with cold, and to him I gave the warm-hearted sailor's mittens. Tears came to his eyes; the brave fellow looked at the mittens, then at me, then at his gun.

"The English are always good," he said simply; "I shall fire my gun better now."

On our way back with empty pockets we found some French soldiers in stables and a Sénégale acting as cook, so we hunted in our coats for one or two odd cigarettes. The Sénégale was so touched that he fumbled round his neck, beneath his tunic, and offered me, as a little souvenir—a German ear! It was said that the Sénégales cut off the ears of dead Germans and made necklaces of them.



A TRENCH IN THE SAND.

GUNS HIDDEN IN BRANCHES.

The French soldiers seemed to relish that tale —so did my companions !

One day we wandered into a lonely Flemish farmyard. Dead cows with their legs in the air made one long for eau de cologne ; beside one ungainly corpse a little party of soldiers were cheerily cooking their midday meal. . . . Inside the farmhouse an old bent man was crouching over the stove ; opposite him sat an aged woman ; and three soldiers and a wounded officer on a mattress completed the party. The window had never been open all the years the farm had been built. Over the stove, on a narrow shelf, were ten priceless willow-pattern plates in excellent condition. From the window we could see the little garden enclosed in a field, and then a plank, and beyond that the trenches and the blue line of the Yser. In the field we had crossed to reach that farmhouse were 300 shell-holes. . . . All through the preceding week the battle of Dixmude had raged round this humble home. Thousands of killed and wounded had covered the ground with their blood and agony, and all through that scene of slaughter and horror the old bent man had sat by his fireside, and the aged

woman had walked to Furnes, about 16 miles away, and on this very morning she had returned. Poor old Darby and Joan!—the war had burst in fury round them, but they only looked on with a sort of childish wonder. I longed to get one of these plates, but I could not bear to ask for it; I knew that at any moment one of the shells splitting the air outside might for ever end the plates, but to ask seemed sacrilege. So we shifted the wounded down to the roadway, and at length to the *poste* and into the ambulance. It was dark by the time the car started—it was safer to work in darkness—and so, piloted by a French officer in his car, we ran back to Furnes without lights. Furnes itself was in darkness, and it was hard to drive and find the hospital in streets where never a lamp was lit, because it was within reach of those dreaded German guns.

Next day we were shelled out of our *poste*. Walton was cooking the breakfast, when a shell burst outside and smashed all our windows. We went out to examine the hole it made, when another came. They were shelling the road and the railway near. In a big

field hundreds of men were drawn up for roll-call, and each shriek made us close our eyes, expecting to see a great gap in their midst. But the officers proceeded calmly, and then the men fell in, company after company, and marched away, falling into single file as they went. The "system" of shelling was explained to us. The enemy always shelled first one spot, then farther on, and farther on again; so it is really safer to stay where the first shells come than to run backwards.

All this time—which was not long as days count—the car kept in constant touch with Calais. Some days I went back there to see that all was well; some days I stayed where I was. At Calais the work went on quietly, steadily—day after day of steady rain and raw cold and bad smells. We were all ill in turn. The water was bad, the work was hard; our food was at first rather a makeshift. One after another suffered from severe dysentery, and there was little comfort for the sick. The hospital, our base, was little more luxurious than the trenches. But now I will try and describe it more fully. Comfort was a mere detail,—a forgotten trifle belonging to a

previous existence; and never a grumble betrayed that any of us noticed its absence. War was work, and we looked for nothing better. We still lived on the few pounds I had brought for emergency, and we had not time to write and tell those at home of our needs. All we could spare went to our *blessés*, and overtime was never thought of. Someone was ill—that meant a night on duty to follow a day's hard work, but that was nothing. To us all war spelled work, and work spelled war; and we never looked beyond.

CHAPTER II

THE HOSPITAL IN EARLY DAYS

WHAT was our hospital to look at? Well, it had not an impressive appearance. That never-to-be-forgotten day when I marched a squad up the yard to "take over" we all noted with interest the air of the place.

A large gateway led into a dirty courtyard where two long ungainly buildings lay parallel with each other. Opposite the doorways were rows of latrines, and the odour from these made one shrink back in disgust. Inside the old schoolrooms looked dirty and untidy, and men lay on straw palliasses; one or two had beds—three wooden planks supported on iron legs: these were *châlets*. In one room next the door two doctors and six nurses were cooking or boiling water on a little stove—an old-fashioned iron thing like a drain pipe. There was one table and a wooden bench in the

room. Opposite this was a ward. An ugly wooden staircase with a sharp narrow turn led to another ward where were 16 men, some of whom seemed very bad ; then there was a dirty room, with one or two wooden benches in it, and that led into a third ward. Above that we were told not to go.

A second staircase led downstairs into the private rooms of the headmistress, who also owned rooms above.

Outside one had to go round the courtyard to get to the second building, but it, we were told, was empty. It took very little time to give everyone a job. Our packing-cases arrived ; the three men carried them in, and emptied four and made a cupboard. The nurses attended at once to the patients, many of whom had very bad wounds ; two were very ill with septic pneumonia, and their wounds had been left without fresh dressings for two days because there was not much hope for them ! Three of us scrubbed the upstairs room and two the kitchen, and the Belgian orderlies watched us, at first resentfully, then curiously, and at length one of them came and took my bucket and scrubbing

cloth from me and himself washed the floor and stairs.

The others followed suit; they were convinced the "English mees" could work, so they worked too.

We scrubbed desks out, to have places at once for bandages and dressings; we invented all sorts of shelves; and that evening at 6 o'clock, when the two former doctors called to offer their help, they exclaimed with surprise at the changes wrought.

We were exceedingly fortunate, too, in our Belgian quartermaster: he was a kindly, simple soul who made his staff work. All that afternoon he kept them busy filling mattresses with straw—arranging dozens of *châlets* he had managed to secure. To him I went in despair over the question of cooking. "Mademoiselle," he said, "tout est possible."

Two days later the kitchen had a good range, a cauldron for hot water, tables, chairs, cups, and plates. This first day he watched us, and we, when we had time, watched him. But by night everything was clean. The "theatre," as we dubbed the empty upstairs room, was stocked with desks; each desk

labelled, and containing bandages, dressings, bottles of iodine, chloroform, peroxide, etc. Walton got us a nice little supper from our stock of tinned meats, etc., which was now carefully arranged in a cupboard made from empty packing-cases. Linen and shirts and socks were also packed neatly in the shelves, and when Sister Wicks appeared, having gone to rest at once like a good nurse, she was immensely surprised. It was 9 o'clock when they left to walk to their billets. I stayed to help Wicks, as there were a lot of bad cases. We had a busy night: a little lay brother was downstairs in the kitchen, and one of the men dressers slept on a stretcher in the theatre.

There was lots of work. We had to boil all our water on a little stove with a small kettle. The night wore slowly on, and I was sitting in the upstairs ward when the lay brother came to beg us to do something for the "*infecté*." The who? The "*suspecte*," who was alone. He had been alone all day. . . . Could nothing be done for him? . . . By degrees we learnt that a typhoid case had been left by the out-going doctors in the

opposite building—alone. They had told me they had had a typhoid case, but had moved him. Perhaps they had meant to, and forgotten. Let us hope so!

Wicks went over to him at once, and I remained in the upstairs ward, where six men had pneumonia, two septic . . . Twice I had to force the clothes off a man who was delirious and kept dressing himself when I was busy elsewhere; and then one big man suddenly got out of bed and stood shouting,

"Let me go; open that door!"

I went to him to put him back to bed, and he raised his great fist and threatened me. I tried to coax him, but he glared at me furiously. I tried to order him like a soldier, but I did not know the words of command. Still he wavered, and then, again rearing himself up, hit out at me.

"Open the door. Why is the door shut?" And I backed to the door, watching him, opened it, and darted through to the theatre.

"Wake up—quick, there's a man raving," I said to the dresser, who was very sound asleep, and rushed back to the ward and again tried to put the man back to bed.

The dresser came, and, telling him to be ready, I darted downstairs, called to the *frère*, and he came up too. But the man's violence increased. He wanted to hit us ; he was mad, and we were all a little nervous, I think. Then Wicks came back, and she marched boldly up to him to take his arm, but he struck out wildly and held us at bay. Then I slipped away, wakened a sergeant downstairs with a hand-wound, and asked him to come up and give the man sharp orders. He did, and the soldier instinct won ; the madman obeyed the sharp voice of authority, and sat down on the bed. Next moment he was under the blankets and the dresser was sitting on the bed ready to hold him down.

One of the men with septic pneumonia was very bad—so bad I sent for a priest and a doctor. The priest came first, hurrying up the stairs, serious and quiet. He bent over the poor fellow, whispering in his ear, and even as I turned back the blankets for the priest to make the sign of the cross on his feet his spirit went. The doctor came next, but merely agreed that the man was dead and departed.

It was all Wicks and I could do to carry

the body to an empty landing where we could lay him out. Then I went down and made cocoa, and we had bread and jam, and up again to the ward; this time to the other septic pneumonia, a fine boy, who said to me gently: "I am going to die, mademoiselle, and I feel a little frightened; do not leave me."

So I stayed by him as much as possible, and told him he must get well, and bathed his head with cold water; but he smiled and repeated always: "Thank you, mademoiselle, but I am going to die." Then he would lie quiet, smiling, and once he said: "I cannot sleep, but I shall soon never waken."

Then dawn came, and washings and dressings and breakfast, and after breakfast I went back to Antoine. Of course it was absurd and sentimental, and I ought to have gone quickly back to a billet and slept, but Antoine was lonely and begged me to stay. "Do not leave me, mademoiselle; I am a little lonely." He got so bad about 10.30, the priest was sent for and gave him extreme unction. He was very simple and brave, and kissed my little ivory and silver crucifix and held it in his hand. He told me of his

mother and his little brother José; he did not know where they were—he thought they would be in England. He spoke English well himself. Aladdin came to his other side, and we moistened his lips with wine and held him while he coughed, for his cough came in spasms and tortured him. I went down to lunch, but the Belgians looked at my red eyes and white face, and I couldn't eat.

The afternoon wore past. Aladdin and I knelt beside him, and he was very splendid. "Do not cry for me, mademoiselle," he said once. "I am a soldier, and I am glad to die like one. I am not afraid to die. God is good.

"Tell my mother, if ever you can see her, that I was happy when I died and thought of her.

"Mademoiselle, what devotion for you English ladies to come and nurse us! My only regret in dying is that I cannot live to show you how grateful a Belgian can be.

"Do not weep, mademoiselle; I am better dying here with you to care for me than many of my comrades who died away from everybody."

He was very beautiful. His face was as noble and fearless as his words; and he was such a boy to die, such a child for all his strong limbs—he was only nineteen. His coughing fits were piteous, but he always smiled gently when they were past and said, "I am not afraid to die."

Walton brought me tea to the door, and I gulped it down. Later they came and begged me to go for supper, but food is impossible to think of sometimes. At last I could bear the fatigue no longer. My knees were cramped, my back aching, and so, lest I should faint, and so distress the poor lad, I kissed his forehead and bade him farewell, and so stumbled from the room. Aladdin and Franklin stayed by him till release came at dawn. The pity of it!—these brave young lives lost to us. The worlds beyond this must be very full of heroes now.

There were many sufferers to think of and care for in those days. One day a stretcher case was carried in unconscious, a gaping head wound healing badly—the body thin and wasted—the legs mere skin and bone. I could span the ankle with my finger and thumb—

yet the lad must have been about twenty-four, and formerly of splendid physique. His mouth was full of solid food—gone wrong ; —his back already broken in a gangrenous bed-sore. The doctors examined him, shrugged their shoulders, and walked out. Later an officer came with two men to remove him to a "head" hospital—in spite of his absolute exhaustion, aggravated by his removal from another hospital—because he was Belgian, and so must be in a Belgian hospital. Here we fought red-tape and won—and for many weeks the poor lad was kept alive by the whole-hearted devotion of Nurse Jordan. She slaved for him ; he needed more constant (and unpleasant) work than any other case in the hospital, but her care told. Gradually, to the amazement of all, "Harry" came back from the Land of Shadows. His eyes opened : in them interest and intelligence began to flicker. Lady Baird brought a water bed from England for him ; the bedsore, bad as it was, grew cleaner. "Harry" ate oranges, smoked one cigarette a day, could sit up at length, and month followed month until one day he was carried on board the

hospital-ship for England. That was a transformation, a solid proof of what care and devotion could do. The doctors never treated him, never examined him even; yet from the half-dead, lifeless thing they brought in evolved the bright-eyed, rosy-tinted face, and a stronger, though still pitifully weak, frame that was sent to England. There, I regret to say, we lost sight of him; a solemn promise to let us know where he was sent was broken by someone, and the work rolled on. "Harry" became a memory—a name.

Then the typhoid scourge grew. We had one case the day we took over; a week later we had ten. A whole building was given up to them, and all day long the typhoid staff worked. At first the coffin-cart rolled in and out of the yard with daily regularity, then its visits became less frequent, and gradually ceased altogether. And those who nursed the typhoids were not nurses whose long training and life-work was spent in nursing. They were gently-bred, high-spirited girls, who heard the call of misery and answered it. Under the supervision of "Sister-Sergeant

Wicks," they went about their monotonous, dull, unpleasant duty, and to it gave their hearts and their high courage and their patience and unselfishness. The weeks passed—the worst and most disagreeable part of the winter—but their courage and their enthusiasm never faltered.

The scarcity of milk, eggs, and brandy was a problem that had to be tackled many times, and our Belgian quartermaster showed a wonderful energy in getting larger supplies than the other hospitals could obtain. Beds, too, were one of our unfulfilled ambitions. The men were more fortunate than in many other hospitals in not having to lie on mattresses on the floor, but the three wooden planks on iron trestles that made their beds left much to be desired ; but here, again, the gods were kind.

One week-end our English chaplain came to Calais, and on Sunday evening a few of us dined with him at the hotel on the *quai ;* and good fortune (to call by the lowest name the force that guides all) sent hither also the S.M.O. of Calais—a gallant and kind-hearted officer, who never threw us a crumb of praise

when inspecting our hospital, but who made ample amends for that in his official reports to England. It sent, also, General Sir Arthur Slogget, kindliest and cheeriest of Directors-General, and Mr. Stanley, the most broad-minded and generous of men. Despite the importance of the conference that brought them to Calais, they had time to remember our little efforts to help, and three days later their interest was materially shown in the arrival of a splendid supply of spring beds, bedding, blankets, sheets, etc., etc. I did wish that the kindly donors had witnessed the delight of the patients!

All this time the staff had many hardships to go through, the chief being the necessity of changing their billets every few days, and of going to different houses at night after a hard day's work. We sent the ambulance with them when possible, but it added to the administrative work greatly, for it meant going to the *mairie* to get new billets, then going round the billets to inspect them, and very often returning to the *mairie* to report empty houses, or inhabitants who flatly refused a room, or workmen's houses which

were quite unsuitable. Taciturn and almost insolent clerks had to be propitiated, and personal feelings had to go to the wall when one was confronted with the possibility of seventeen or eighteen English girls being left homeless—without beds to sleep in!

Many an afternoon has run into evening, and supper been relegated to a late hour, in this disheartening, thankless job. How I hated it!—the endless explanations, the necessity of keeping one's temper under insulting remarks, the visits to strange houses, the rudeness of many of the proprietors, the constant red tape that sent me backwards and forwards from one official to the other. Unluckily it was a job I had always to do myself, as the other officer of our little band did not speak French. It was the same with the arrival of stores—all the fuss and worry attendant on getting them off the *quai* fell to me, as it meant more arguments and more French officials to cope with. Then I tried to get a house given us for sleeping accommodation, and, after endless refusals met with persistent new applications, after endless arguments and explanations and pleading,

and stormy scenes, I was sent to see the owner of an abandoned shop that had been offered as an overflow hospital. Bare rooms and dirty walls, one table, five chairs, and 20 beds composed the furniture, but it was rent free, and it was available at once. A little flattery and coaxing soon brought good-humoured assent from the owner, and the F.A.N.Y. had a "flat."

What a relief it was to have a home to go to at night! We painted the walls where the paper was hanging in shreds; we cut out pictures and put them up round the room; we got a few cushions—there was no more endless worry about billets. Four of us slept at the hospital in camp-beds—a trained nurse, the housekeeper, a chauffeur, and myself. We had a lumber-room behind us and slept in half our living-room. At night, if cases came, we were on the spot to decide if they could be kept or sent elsewhere. We had our meals in the kitchen, and picnic teas to which the English officers in Calais came occasionally. There was eternal hub-bub and noise, but we enjoyed it. For a few weeks an airwoman cooked our suppers and baked cakes and jam

tarts. There was constant commotion. At night we fell into bed with a sigh of relief.

The wounded loved us. When evacuation orders came these men would burst into tears, refuse their food, beg to be allowed to stay. We sent them off with heavy hearts. We were spokes on a tremendous wheel—orders must be obeyed. And so the days wore to Christmas, and that is a tale by itself.

CHAPTER III

CONVALESCENTS AND CHRISTMAS

It was ten days before Christmas, and the Surgeon-General looked worried. His kindly smile was vague, his eyes wandered.

"What is the matter, my General?" I ventured to inquire; and he looked at the Colonel, then at me.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he said, "we can find no place for our typhoid patients who are past the worst, and we must make room for many others who arrive."

"My General," I said half in jest, "I will find you a place."

He and Colonel F. laughed.

"Thank you, mademoiselle. Can you, then, succeed where we fail?"

"You shall have your convalescent home as a New Year's gift to the Belgians from the F.A.N.Y.s," I retorted.

All that afternoon I was very silent. It

was true I had spoken on the spur of the moment; but the need was very great, and when the need is great there is always a way if one can but find it. That evening a sad story was brought to me. Four of our poor typhoids had been so far on the road to recovery they were taken from us to make room for worse cases. They were sent to another hospital, where they slept on straw and got little food and less milk. The die was cast.

Next day, with Billy and Bond and the old Unic, I went along the coast. We tackled a hotel at Sangatte, but the proprietor was in Paris, and we could get no authoritative answer to our demand that we should take it over as a convalescent home. So then Billy and Bond remembered a *château* on the road to Boulogne, where Belgian soldiers had been billeted. It was very cold, but we raced along and came to the *château*. Leaving the car at the gates, we walked in, and were received in the hall (which was evidently in use as an orderly-room) by a major.

"Monsieur," I said blandly, "we are English nurses in the service of the Belgian

Army. We have a hospital at Calais of 100 beds. We want this *château* to send out convalescents to. How soon can you find your men other accommodation ? "

To say that the poor man was surprised would be hardly adequate. His mouth opened, his eyes bulged, and at last he gasped :

" But, mademoiselle, we are using this *château ;* it is ours. And it is not suitable for sick men ; it is cold and damp, and there are only three rooms left open."

So we amicably visited the kitchen and the other rooms. I had to admit it was not all one could desire for convalescents. But I would not give up hope.

" If we find nothing better we shall return. Monsieur would not let the sick suffer for want of the *château*, I am sure."

As we stood at the gate we saw an elderly priest climbing the hill towards us. With a sudden instinct Bond and I tackled him.

" Good evening ! Monsieur is perhaps the *curé* of the village ? "

Monsieur not only was *curé* but replied in fluent English. He not only was a French priest, but had an Irish mother. He loved us

on the spot. He had an empty hall that he kept for church entertainments; it would hold 25 convalescents. He mounted the car. We escorted him home; we inspected and accepted the hall; we talked of drainage, and accommodation, and everything possible.

Next morning, with triumph in my heart, I told the General, in a casual voice, that the convalescent home was found and would be ready on Christmas Eve. Thereafter followed the question of beds and blankets. A hurried visit to England four days before Christmas included a rush to the British Red Cross, and the generous grant of 25 more beds for our typhoids from Mr. Stanley. So the old wooden beds were disinfected and went out in an ambulance to St. Ingilvert; the blankets and mattresses followed, and then the patients and two girls to look after them, cook and cater, and keep them in order. And then the authorities woke up to the fact of what had happened, and even spoke of withdrawing passes for the cars to St. Ingilvert, and vaguely protested that they had not consented to convalescents going there. But possession generally ensures victory, and the

convalescents remained until they were cured.

The enterprise was unique. The staff consisted of only two girls—a mistake, perhaps, viewed in the light of later experiences ; but they worked nobly, and not till long afterwards did I realise that they had been doing the work of four. Anyhow, the patients grew fat and rosy-cheeked.

They used to rise at 6, have roll-call, and breakfast ; then they made their beds and tidied up, under supervision of one girl, whilst the other got the dinner ready ; then after a good meal they were taken *en masse* for a walk, had coffee and biscuits on entering, played games, read, and smoked till supper time ; then after washing up they went to bed. The two F.A.N.Y.'s slept in an adjoining farmhouse ; the *curé* would willingly have provided them with a room, but the laws of his Church made it impossible unless they had both been over forty, whereas their joint ages did not reach fifty !

The *curé* has been a staunch friend ever since, and he and his old housekeeper nearly wept when after three months the Belgians

secured Camp du Ruchard for their convalescents, and St. Ingilvert knew us no more.

Christmas came at Calais, and we got trees with great difficulty, and candles and ornaments, and spent a busy Christmas Eve preparing all things. At midnight we went softly round each ward and placed a complete outfit of new clothes (*i.e.*, shirt, vest, pants, socks, scarf, mittens, and handkerchief) by each man's bed. Every bed was full, and we had two extra.

The General came, and received a little lucky pig off the tree. Tears came to the dear old man's eyes, and for a moment he was choked with emotion. The Belgian heart is very easily touched, and shows the generosity of the Belgian character.

Everyone got a present from the trees. Wards 2 and 3 had a tree in the operating theatre, and all came round it. Ward 1, where all were helpless cases, had a tree to themselves, and wards 4, 5, and 6 had a large tree where all could see it.

What a spread we had too—cakes and shortbread and sweets! And all the orderlies

and patients, and many officers and doctors besides our own, and an English naval officer, were the guests. We dragged the piano to the head of the stairs ; and how the men loved the songs and the choruses ! The pianist-in-chief was an orderly who had been a professor of music at Louvain. A week before Christmas he had a nervous breakdown, and on Christmas morning his temperature was 101 ; but his sole obsession was to play the piano for the "Miss," and so he worked himself into such a frenzy the doctors said it would be safer for him to get up and play than to be kept in bed by force. How happy he was, too ! His cheeks were flushed ; his long, thin nostrils quivering ; his eyes dilated. He played on and on. Poor lad ! he has been in bed ever since. For weeks after his case puzzled the doctors, and then he was sent south with tubercular disease.

After the tea was over (it lasted till 7 o'clock) an English Tommy came and sang to the men in the different wards. Then we had dinner in the kitchen, with plum-pudding and turkey, and at last, very weary, we dragged ourselves to bed about 11 o'clock. As most of us had

been to early church at 6 that morning we were thankful to turn in.

A week later came the Belgians' turn. They asked us to come into the kitchen at midnight on New Year's Eve. We were greeted by the whole staff, who made long speeches about "the English misses and their devotion, and how we had left our homes to care for their homeless wounded." And they all wept, so much did their speeches touch their hearts; and I tried to reply suitably, and assure them that we were honoured in helping the heroes who had saved Europe from the hordes of the Hun. Then the adjutant kissed the cook (an old soldier, I had better explain), and the cook embraced the sergeant, and in fact the Belgian staff all wept and embraced each other. Then the cook and the *chef de service* insisted on executing a weird and wonderful dance, and sang all the time a Flemish ditty that we did not understand. Then we all joined hands and sang "Auld Lang Syne" which *they* did not understand, and then we bade them farewell and went off in the Unic to "first-foot" the British Senior Medical Officer and the Naval Transport

Officer. Alas! the former fiery Irishman was in bed, and did not understand Scotch customs, and the porter whom we sent to waken him returned hastily, swearing that nothing would induce him to go near the Colonel's door again.

So we wound up at a far-off hospital where there were British doctors and nurses; but alas! the four Scotch doctors were tee-totallers, and looked sleepy and bored, and so we returned to our own quarters to snatch a few hours' sleep before morning.

So passed our first Christmas at Calais, and had anyone told us then that we should spend our next Christmas in France we should have treated them with scorn.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AT A REGIMENTAL AID POST

When the battalion doctors chose an abandoned cottage on the roadside they only asked for shelter from the rain and cold and mud—comforts were there none. Picture, then, our little *poste*. The door opened into a small square room, with two chairs and a table; off this were a tiny room (which held a small round table about the size of a card-table and two chairs) and the kitchen, in one corner of which was the well which supplied the house with drinking water; overhead was a long, low loft, where 40 to 50 soldiers slept on bare boards. Here, then, we established ourselves.

The outer room was used by all and sundry. Every morning from 8 to 9 large numbers of men came from the trenches half a mile away to report sick, or get slight wounds dressed. They stood in a mass in the doorway and entered two by two. Dr. Hannsens and little

Dr. L—— examined them, and we stood by ready to put on a fresh dressing or administer a dose of medicine. To each one we put the same question : " Have you a good shirt and good socks ? " And the necessary articles were ready. Most of the men did not stand on ceremony. Their eager " Merci beaucoup, mam'selle," was followed by a dirty ragged shirt being thrown on the floor and the new one hastily donned. Socks, too ! . . . One lad told me he had worn his socks two and a half months, and truly they looked like it ! Their simple gratitude was very touching.

Then the men went out and fresh ones entered. When the morning " out-patients " was over, Sayer and I usually accompanied the doctor to some part of the trenches. Once the way lay along the railway, where large shell holes made the going difficult. Shrapnel whizzed over us, and we stood to watch the result. In a field at the corner some troop horses were tied up.

Poor beasts ! When we returned 15 of them lay with their heels in the air. The doctors considered the railway too unhealthy, so we struck off across a field. It was heavy

going, and we were clinging to the usual bundles of shirts and socks and cigarettes. To add to the difficulty, rain came down in torrents. We reached a communication trench, and Dr. L—— and I fell into this and stumbled along. My field-boots were up to the knees in mud, my skirt was turned up round my waist, my overcoat thick with slush. It was a tiring journey, and we were glad to climb out and cross a field under cover of a straggly hedge. We came on a draggled but cheery officer. He greeted us joyously, and accepted for himself some handkerchiefs, then guided us to what looked like a badly-turfed bank. He clapped his hands, and the bank heaved; large pieces of turf were cautiously pulled aside, and rows of jolly faces appeared.

"What will you have, monsieur?"

"Ah, but a clean shirt, mam'selle, but a thousand thanks! The English are always kind."

Then another cheery face would peer out like a rabbit from its hole:

"If mademoiselle had a pair of socks! . . . Oh, but the English are good!"

And so on till we were left with empty arms and apologies for the stock giving out and assurances that more would come.

No casualties had occurred—the weather was so bad the Boches were keeping under shelter. So we went back, dirty and muddy, to our hut, where Walton had a hot and steaming lunch to welcome us. Rations included tins of " platre," a sort of corned beef, and this chopped up and mashed with potatoes formed our usual meal. Then we had bread and coffee—very black and very strong—and washed up for the afternoon. This afternoon we were invited to coffee at 4 p.m. with the doctors of another battalion.

They were celebrating the fact that Dr. Van de W—— had received the Cross of the Legion of Honour. He had carried two wounded gunners to safety, and then returned to a trench just as the Germans reached it to care for a wounded officer. Later on he escaped from the Boches and came back to his work. He was a smart little man, with a keen, alert face, and his comrades had drawn with coal on the walls imaginary and wonderful incidents of his career, closing in reality, and

showing the rescue of the gunners and his intrepid return to the trench as the Germans arrived! They had made him a wreath of laurel, which they clapped on his head despite his protests. That morning an orderly had gone ten miles on his bicycle to fetch champagne for the occasion! We were a merry party—six doctors, a commandant, a colonel in a green coat, a stray Englishman who blew in from the storm of wind and rain; and the champagne and biscuits and coffee were passed gaily round. Speeches were made, and the cheery scene was strange indeed. We could hear the guns outside. The little, long stove was white hot. The presence of English girls staggered the Englishman. He was very much taken aback; to him it was an unheard-of adventure!

Then in the midst of our merriment came a loud knocking on the door, and next moment it flew open and a drenched figure stumbled in, dazed and white of face, clinging to a rifle with one hand, and the other hand in its shabby blue sleeve tied up with blood-stained rags. After him came a man carrying a stretcher, and the second stretcher-bearer.

Back went our chairs and coffee cups, and in a moment the hero of the feast was ripping the trouser leg of the moaning figure and we were bandaging the shoulder and hand of the other man. The leg was an ugly sight, and before it was dressed another stretcher was carried in, and a lad with half his head shot off lay at our feet. Outside a lull came in the storm, and as the rain ceased the clouds cleared and a dull red sunset flamed across the sky.

As the ambulance rolled off with its burden of pain Sayer and I stood for a moment to watch the sky. Up came an armoured train—quite near us over the rails we had walked along that morning. It rolled up, cumbersome, quaint and wicked-looking, and came to a standstill a few hundred yards away. Fascinated, we stood watching. From the sides a mass of figures seemed to clamber and rush round, and then boom, boom, and a cloud of smoke melted into the twilight. Bro . . . oom—broo . . . oom, boom—boom, growled the angry guns at Dixmude, where the Boches had received the shot.

Bom-bom, spat the train, and boom—boom, came the answer. It was an unfor-

gettable thing. Up here alone, far from civilisation, very far from the homes where perhaps our people thought of us, but certainly did not imagine our surroundings—here we were, girls of the twentieth century in this atmosphere of storm and war living what surely few women ever dreamt in their wildest fancies until this war began. This was life! My ears tingled; I breathed in long, deep breaths. Had I spoken, a sort of wild war song would have come from my lips. The Highland blood in me bubbled and frothed; I wanted to run for miles—to race, to climb—action at all costs. And then . . . well, along the road came weary, stumbling figures, and most of them carried stretchers or long strange bundles. There was no romance or triumph here, no wild war cry and exaltation—just these men, dirty and muddy and footsore, bringing in their comrades, broken and maimed and moaning . . . or very quiet. . . .

The sunset and the fight between the armoured train and the German guns at Dixmude lost their glamour. War was no romantic heroic epic, only this dreary reality of gaping wounds and quivering flesh. These

men were far from their homes. They had left their wives and children, all they loved—their lives of comfort and good food and warm firesides; and their rewards were not laurels and the plaudits of a rejoicing and grateful crowd. No, their rewards were shrapnel and torn limbs, hours of pain and misery, mud and cold and wet, and much tossing from place to place; but they smiled and said "Thank you!" when a painful dressing was finished. These were the men of the Yser—shorn of romance and poetry, pitiful and human and noble beyond all words; heroes indeed, and heroes of the world.

It was late that night when we passed into the darkness to grope our way back to our own post—so dark, that when I slipped and my foot came to rest on the body of the man who did not live to go on in the ambulance the others did not *see* why I was silent, nor why my voice was shaky for a few minutes, nor that my thoughts rested with the poor corpse who lay there alone under a thick blanket.

A diversion occurred that caused much amusement. In our absence my brother had

arrived from Calais with the Unic, and we found him, black with mud, mending a tyre in the roadway. His task completed, he came through to wash in the kitchen, and I left him getting off layers of mud into a bucket of warm water. Later he joined us.

"Have you emptied your bucket?" I asked, as I had not heard the heavy outer door open.

"Oh, yes," he replied; "I emptied it down the sink in the kitchen."

A horrid thought came to me.

"There is no sink," I exclaimed, "only the well of drinking water in the corner."

Sure enough it was there the dirty water had gone, and someone even murmured that the coffee that night had a flavour all its own.

We had a hot meal of coffee and bread and syrup, and then we girls drew our straw from the pile thrown in by the orderlies, and covered the floor of the tiny room and folded our tunics to make a cushion for our heads, and got our blankets out, one for each. In the big room the doctors slept on straw also, and in the little kitchen twelve soldiers were snoring and grunting. The guns boomed;

the smells from the backyard were overpowering ; the cold was horrid ; our damp stockings did not keep the straw from pricking our feet ; my poisoned finger was throbbing. This was war ! And the wounded ! Yes, there were wounded—where ? Somewhere . . . and this was sleep.

CHAPTER V

A DAY OF ODD JOBS

One day in the spring of 1915 Chris and I started off for the front with "Flossie," the little Ford ambulance. It was a perfect day, a cold wind blowing but a blue sky overhead. The road between Calais and Dunkirk flew past; the walls of Gravelines and the narrow winding streets were left behind. Dunkirk itself was gay with zouaves in their baggy red trousers. Along by the canal we raced—past ponderous convoys toiling up with their loads. Many a staff car and "*ravitaillement*" wagon met us and sped on their ways. And so to Furnes, no longer the busy centre of activity it had been earlier, but a desolate town with one or two large shell holes in the square. No shops, no cafés, except in the side streets—all was quiet and deserted. So we left Furnes, too, behind. Along the straight bare road we whizzed, and

now not far off we heard the old familiar booming. We passed the picket at Pervyse, and there drew up to make inquiries. As we halted we caught sight of two Englishmen pacing slowly along a side path, looking at the rows of damaged houses—the streets of ruin—and on recognising one as Major G——, a familiar figure in Belgian lines, we hailed him. He introduced his companion, Lord Curzon, and on learning our errand they made further inquiry, and let us know that the fighting was in the neighbourhood of Oostvleteren. We ran on past the field with its 300 shell holes that had formed our first landmark in November. Our old "*poste*" at the cross-roads was occupied by strangers, who hailed us with delight, and with them we left a few hundred cigarettes and some socks for the —— Division. A shell, mistaking its direction, came crashing to earth on the roadway near by, so we hastened our farewells and shot off past the little church that had been bombarded steadily for months. It was still standing, but the troops once quartered in the cottages round about had been withdrawn. The canal bridge, where the morning

washing parade was held regularly in December, was deserted. No life seemed to exist in that once busy spot; and the shrapnel whizzing over us in the sky, directed against the railway to our right, was a sign of the times. We slowed up at Lampernisse, and sadness seized us. The church was down. I recalled its friendly tower—the throng of soldiers that had surrounded it, the gay faces of the little blue Belgians that had met one cheerily on every side. To-day there was quiet and stillness, and the outer walls of the church were represented by heaps of loose stones. Inside the pillars stood—broken wall, broken altar; fragments of glass and melted lead from the windows that had been. As we watched, the *curé* appeared, sad of face. He came to us simply, and at our few faltering words tears came to his eyes.

"There were 40 wounded inside," he said gently; "we saved all we could." A grave at my feet was churned up—broken bits of wood stuck upright in the earth; a heavy stone monument had turned sideways and lurched forward like a drunken man; and something else lay near, thrown out of the

earth to which in happier days the priest had committed it. I shuddered involuntarily. The *curé* asked if we could take one of his remaining parishioners to safety: she was old and bedridden; her cottage was there in the shadow of the church. Shells came daily and at any time one might strike the roof that sheltered her. We took a stretcher up the tiny path, and in at the little door. There on the floor on a mattress lay an old withered woman. We carried her out gently, the *curé* helping. General J—— passed—a brave and kindly man, adored by the soldiers. He remembered us, and approved our action. Then he asked us to lunch with him on our return journey.

We started off slowly and evenly and reached Alveringhem, where the *curé* had told us a convent of nuns took in such old and helpless peasants. Alas! the mother superior refused. Nothing would shake her decision; she would have no more—her hands were full. I looked round the large waiting-room, and begged her to let the poor old thing lie there. But it could not be. So we went on several miles farther, and were directed to a

home kept by an Englishwoman for refugees. We sent messengers on every side to find her —unsuccessfully—so we left the old woman in the house in charge of the other refugees, as we could find no one with authority. We left full particulars and departed. We were late, as the difficulty in finding shelter for our charge had been greater than we anticipated.

We lunched off sandwiches *en route*, and explained our non-appearance for lunch at Divisional Headquarters. General J—— was very charming, and gave us tea and invited us to lunch for another day.

We had arranged to dine at an artillery mess at Ramscappelle, and so hurried on there. Things were fairly lively, and after a wonderful dinner we had some music, and then in the darkness went up to the trenches. The rockets and flares were fascinating. Viewed from afar they are strangely remote, but very friendly here, when one crouched down amongst all these gallant men—soldiers and heroes whose country had been torn from them, whose wrongs cry out for vengeance, whose simple response to honour saved the whole of Europe from being overrun by the barbarous Boches.

We made sure the doctors had no cases to dispose of, and returned to the brickyard, where "Flossie" waited patiently. The flares and a pocket flashlight were all the light we had, and we got off across bumpy roads—in and out of shell holes. Once we nearly had a nasty smash, but that was near Furnes. A convoy of great heavy wagons had been left on the wrong side of the road, and as lights were not permitted and the night very dark Chris was driving slowly and warily—peering into the shadows. She brought "Flossie" to a violent halt, our bonnet touching the first of these unwieldy monsters!

Three days later General J—— sent his motor cyclist to bring us out to lunch. The courtesy was indeed great, as the lad had 50 miles to come, if not more. Unluckily he had a smash, and rode back on the step of our car. He was a type of the modern Belgian youth. Well-bred, clever, with frank, humorous eyes, and the adorable smile of a "Parisian gamin," he kept us amused all the way. His comments were racy, and always gallant.

"I am no longer a simple soldier; I am

corporal. The General has done that—because of you others, there is no doubt."

And his merry eyes challenged us to disbelieve that a simple soldier would not be good enough as escort.

"Yes, we are all gay," he would say; "yes, but it is sad too. I am *fiancé*, and I have no letter from her—no, not from the day the war broke out. I have written, yes, but she does not answer. It is gay the war, *n'est-ce pas*, madame?"

And a little later, with his childish pout: "I have had a letter from my mother. She is in Brussels; she does not find the war gay. She cannot see me, and she loves me."

His shrill whistle, prolonged on a certain note, took us past sentries and barricades.

"You see, the Belges are musical. There, hear me whistle like a bird, and say 'Passez! passez! les oiseaux!'"

The wind was keen and the roads greasy, but Chris sat steady as a rock, her great grey eyes fixed on the future, her mobile face calm and tranquil. Jean was piqued.

"Look, mam'selle, Chris is absorbed. She drives, yes; but she will not listen to our

chatter. She has no time to smile then. Oh, these ladies who drive cars ! "

Chris (who had danced and skated in peaceful days with the little cyclist) turned her ready smile in his direction, and he forgave.

We arrived at length at the farmhouse where Divisional Headquarters were. The General was busy, but greeted us warmly. He sent for liqueurs, at the appearance of which Chris edged diplomatically nearer the coal-scuttle. The General produced his mascot, a woolly dog sent by a lady from England. He showed us also his grand chain and Order of Leopold Premier given him for his gallantry at Dixmude. Then we had lunch—and such a luncheon as any London restaurant would have been proud to serve. Suddenly the telephone rang. Taubes were bombarding a village near at hand. Even as the adjutant rang off and reported to the General we heard the engine throbbing overhead. We all ran out to the yard to watch the graceful death-dealing machine circling in the clear sky. Then it flew on and glided out of sight. The General showed me his two horses lying down in a little shed near.

I forgot to mention that before lunch he took us up to his bedroom to wash, and displayed with simple pride the bed he shared with his major and the other bed which two captains occupied. Accommodation was limited! He also produced a bottle of scent for our use!

Then he sent for his car, and with Major —— we set off for the nearest battery. The chauffeur cared not for speed limits, and a wild rush landed us in a very short time at the corner of a field. We walked across this to inspect a battery of small guns. Then we went on, carefully avoiding the wire of a field telephone to an advanced gun position. As we neared what looked like a ridge of trees we saw that these also were cunningly contrived to conceal the guns. This was a new battery of which the officer in charge was very proud. He told us what good work they had done within the last ten days. They had only been sent up then. In another hour he suggested we might judge for ourselves; but General J—— did not deem it prudent, so we thanked the officer and the cheery gunners for all the trouble they had

WHERE THE HUN HAS PASSED.

WAYSIDE GRAVES.

taken. Here, too, the dug-outs were beautifully finished off—even little panes of glass were let in as windows.

The General then took us to a bridge on the canal where fishing was occasionally indulged in. The doctor who had lunched with us appeared, and with great glee produced a hand grenade which he flung in the water. The explosion was followed by a geyser-like rising of the water, and then hundreds of dead fishes floated to the surface and were caught in a net and safely landed!

Just then an officer joined us to ask if we could take away from the nearest village four little children and their mother, who was shortly expecting another baby. The village was being bombarded, and the little family were in terror. We gladly acquiesced, and the General took us back in his car; we got "Le Petit Camerade" (our second Ford ambulance) into action and departed, Jean, the motor cyclist, being sent by the General to see us on our way. We collected the poor little mother and her four sturdy little boys, wrapped them well up in scarves and balaclavas, and took them to the English lady's refugees'

home. Again, unluckily, we failed to find her. Jean ran round himself to look for her, and at last, after waiting for an hour, we left the little family there and departed.

The relief of the good woman was touching. She was not like the other woman with nine children, a husband, and a pig, whom we tried in vain to rescue. The doctors of a certain division were perturbed by the danger run by the nine children (whose ages were from two to eleven), who had to lie in a damp trench for four hours every day whilst their village was bombarded. After much argument, the woman consented to leave, and we arranged with the Refugee Committee in Calais to take them over, and we sent a big car out to fetch them. However, when it came to the point, the mother refused to leave the pig; all persuasion was useless, and the car took the father and the nine to Calais. Two days later he got permission to take his nine children for a walk; and they never returned. News was heard of them walking back the 50 miles to rejoin their mother and the pig!

Having left the four little fellows waving to us from the doorstep, we retraced the road

and arrived at Pervyse. Here we said good-bye to Jean and took the road to Ramscappelle. The sentries at first refused to let us pass, as the road was being shelled, but we were in a hurry, so they yielded. We left the car at one point and took shelter in the ruins of a cottage, but a shell also landed there, knocking one of the shattered walls to pieces, and so we deemed it more prudent to rejoin the "Petit Camerade" and race for our lives. A burst of derisive laughter followed us. Unknowingly we had been on the edge of a Belgian trench!

As we neared Ramscappelle a soldier leapt towards us with a warning cry. We heard the cold shriek above our heads that denoted trouble coming; and Chris set her mouth a trifle sternly, rammed her foot on the accelerator, and we were past just as the house staggered towards us and fell, blocking the road behind us. We glanced round; the soldier who had shouted waved reassuringly, and we turned into the old brickyard. A few fresh shells had fallen, and beside the path were two little graves marked with wooden crosses that had not been there last time we

passed. We found a suitable place to leave the " Petit Camerade " against a wall of bricks piled high. The ground was rough and greasy. We hurried to the cottage where the artillery mess was, and the whizzing and whistling overhead denoted " activity on the front." In fact we ran at top speed up that garden path and hammered on the door. Friendly faces greeted us, and we were soon inside and the table was being laid.

Our hosts got us a jug of cold water and a basin, and we proceeded to wash on a chair in the corner of the room, the commandant and three other officers being interested spectators. Then we sat down to dinner and had soup and fish and meat ; and then, ye gods ! asparagus and cheese and fruit—a right noble repast. The windows were barred and shuttered, but all around we heard the heavy boom of big guns, the angry screaming of shells. As the meal drew to an end the two telephones in the room got busy. There were, I think, fifteen officers and ourselves, and two of the subalterns were at the receivers :

" Yes, my wife is in England. She is so happy there ; she loves the English, and there

is no sign of war." The commandant was interrupted in his peaceful picture by the sharp voices of the telephonists.

"'Allo, 'allo, 'allo! Find the trench major. 'Allo! What? No, the major, find the major; I would speak with the major. No—the major . . . "

The wild glare of the exasperated man who wanted the major met the equally ferocious stare of the man who held the other wire, and whose voice had all this time been cutting through his.

"'Allo, 'allo! Yes, this is the Artillery; yes, he is here. 'Allo! What? When? At what hour? What? Speak up! Cré nom de Dieu, speak clearly! Pardon, mon Colonel. To-night towards eleven hours. Yes, mon Colonel. It is understood."

By this time the table talk had risen—something was under discussion . . . Our voices rose; the two telephonists voices rose also. My eyes met Chris's; we could not help laughing—this was like a scene from a pantomime.

"Sapristi!" The man who still wanted the major could not forbear longer.

"Silence—I beg of you. Silence. Be

quiet, you with that telephone. 'Allo, 'allo! Find the trench major."

From the other side of the room the other man spoke :

" Be quiet with your own telephone. 'Allo, 'allo! Yes—yes. Gentlemen—ladies—I pray you be silent. 'Allo! Yes—mon Colonel. Oh, what is then—Lieutenant who ? "

And so on! We were asked to write our names in the pocket-books of all our hosts. Then someone said " Music," and in a moment we were all round the piano that had been brought from a shelled farmhouse in our honour. The telephones were still busy, and one young lieutenant got orders to go to the top of a very tall chimney that remained standing " to observe, as there was a certain movement along the front." His comrades mocked him, crisping their fingers, as if climbing hand over hand up the long iron ladders.

" You make a good target, George," one wit said soothingly.

George bade us good-night, looking annoyed. We heard him in the passage directing his sergeant to go up the chimney and waken him if necessary!

Chris played and sang song after song; every chorus caught up and re-echoed. Then in a lull we heard steps outside and a heavy banging on the shutter, and as we listened a pure tenor voice lilted :

"Good-bye, Piccadilly,
Good-bye, Leicester Square;
It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there."

"De —— de ——!" everyone shouted, and Captain de —— entered, smiling.

"Where have you come from?" we asked, for we had last seen him at Calais.

"My battery is seven miles from here, and they telephoned to me you ladies were here, so behold me!"

We had more songs, and then the Belgian National Anthem. It was a fine and inspiring thing to hear—sung from their hearts by these big, strong men who were offering their lives daily for their king and country, and sung as it was to the tune played by Chris, with her lovely girlish face, and the deep booming of the guns to render it still more effective. I shall never forget it.

Then out in the darkness we groped our

way to our car, thinking the day's adventures were ended. Along the sky the rockets and star shells blazed and spluttered, lighting us for the moment, and then leaving the darkness still more oppressive around us. It took much pushing and shoving to get the "Petit Camerade" on to the roadway, and our hosts bade us good-bye heartily, though in whispers, as we were very near the "movement along the front."

CHAPTER VI

A NIGHT IN NIEUPORT

It was very dark that night on leaving Ramscappelle as we halted at the "Infirmerie" at the cross-road to ask if they had anyone to send in. The doctor was out—in the trenches probably—but the orderly reported there were wounded in Nieuport. After a few minutes' discussion we left the car beside the Infirmerie door, and, laden with the big field haversack, started off on foot. The road was lonely, and we groped our way, crossed the bridge, and held on to the right. We spoke little, for we were tired, and so came along the side of a wood to where another road branched off. We were brought to a quick stop by a high-pitched voice shouting, and discerned a sentinel, his rifle pointed in our direction, his voice agitated. I yelled "Officiers," Chris yelled "Croix Rouge," and together we shouted at him "Liège," or whatsoever the

word was that night. If the wood had been full of Germans they would have heard us; as it was, our good sentinel repeated his challenge, and we hurled the word at his head with all the breath in our bodies, for we liked not that rifle pointed full at us. He hesitated and at last had a brain-wave.

"Advance one and give the word," he said, and hand in hand we tiptoed towards him and whispered in his ear the word we had hurled at him from afar. The effect was magical!

"Pass, mesdemoiselles—pass; it is cold, is it not? Ah, these roads! I like them not."

"Horrid work for you," we ventured sympathetically, and got the information that he was a volunteer, and did not join the army with the thought of lonely nights at windy cross-roads. It was nervous work; but what would one have, after all? It has to be done; and some day, why some day, the war will end and the German swine be driven from poor little Belgium. A packet of cigarettes won warm gratitude, and we walked on and were soon lost in the darkness.

All this time the sound of big guns and the rush of rockets and flares skyward marked

the Line—that wonderful heroic Line! Then we were in a street with a trench all along the canal bank on one side and a row of silent cottages on the other. Here and there a cottage had fallen from its place in the ranks, and its walls and roof lay across the roadway or pushed into a heap roughly. We reached the end and hesitated, for a road went to the right towards the rocket flares; a road went to the left round a corner. We turned leftwards—for we sought the town—and swung round the corner in the darkness into lines of men and rifles. We walked on, wondering a little, but not daring to talk, and suddenly a big figure barred our way and we were challenged. We explained our errand, and an officer appeared. These were the French lines, and he directed us to the English sailors' dressing-station, where, he said, there were wounded. A little sergeant came with us to the corner and put us on our way, and so we walked up the hill one behind the other, for a long line of soldiers was coming towards us single file. They eyed us as we passed, but the darkness veiled us from each other, though I heard one wondering voice say:

"Mother of God! are there women here?"

And one little man twisted his head round and sent after us a soft

"Good-night, mademoiselle, God keep you!"

Gradually a wider street lay before us, and we were stopped by a patrol of French marines, who explained our whereabouts and continued on their way.

Houses with gaping wounds in their walls were everywhere—houses with no upper floor. Heaps of loose stones and masonry had to be crossed; in places the streets were almost impassable. The stars had come out now, and there was a pale moon, and we could note our surroundings better.

One street corner I remember well. A large corner house was much broken up. The big lower rooms lay open; the floor above was a mass of stones and furniture—chairs and tables were mixed with remnants of ceiling that had crashed through, and waved protesting legs upwards. We had to pick our way across the roadway, for it was one huge mass of *débris*. Bits of curtains and carpets were discernible.

Once Chris saved me from walking straight

into a cellar: the covering was off, and it must have been a veritable death trap! Once in another cellar we caught a glimpse of a soldier cooking his supper on a small lamp. In one street, where the upper storeys no longer stood and the lower were barred, we heard songs and merriment; and on we walked, till suddenly a great pile stood against the sky. The cathedral, I suppose. Its towers were damaged, and here and there shells had struck it, and we longed to see it by daylight. We walked on and on, but no sign of the dressing-station caught our eye. At last we stopped. It was about 1 a.m., and an eerie feeling of unreality seemed to encircle us. We had left all buildings behind us for the moment—the last a sort of square or crescent, where every house was empty and deserted. Louder than ever echoed the sounds of battle, and the light of the flares lasted five full minutes. We could see each other's face, and we could hear more and more distinctly the snip of rifles—even, it seemed to us, we could hear the click of the triggers. The pale strange light that was on everything was weird, and we decided

to go back and see if we had passed our destination.

I think it was an unspoken relief to us to return towards the houses and the presence of others. It has been an everlasting regret, all the same, that we did not explore just a little farther!

We struck a house with a light showing through the shutters and hammered on the wall, but could get no reply. And at last in a side street we saw a dull red lamp burning over a door and hurried towards it. The door bore a large red cross, so we knocked, but getting no reply, walked in. The first room was empty save for a table and chair; the second had three beds in it, but empty also; then a small room to the right had mattresses on the floor and a broken chair. That was all. A scrap of paper on the wall caught our eyes, and with an electric torch we read enough to know it was a Belgian dressing-station.

We walked on, and at last a French sailor guided us to the corner of a street and pointed to a door. We found there a large inscription that English wounded were to be brought

here, and fetched from here when opportunity occurred. We walked in, calling out in English, but never a sound greeted us. We found mattresses and chairs and heaps of straw, and one or two bandages, and a chair much the worse for wear; but that was all, and no wounded nor sign of wounded. So we thoughtfully left a card with our names on the table, wondering who would find it, and if an Englishman found it if he would believe that his countrywomen had really penetrated to such a God-forsaken place at 1 a.m. in the morning.

Our errand had developed into a wild-goose chase, so we retired sadly. Going out of the town we suddenly saw two great black figures emerge so swiftly from the roadway at our sides that we jumped, startled, and hurried on breathing rather hard. Strange to say, a week later one of them was brought to Calais wounded, and recognised Chris as she helped to put him in her ambulance.

"Oh, mademoiselle," he cried joyously. "I saw you in Nieuport not long ago!"

But to us that early morning this figure of a zouave black with African suns was a

sinister one, and for very little we would have taken to our heels and run !

We negotiated the sentinel easily on our return journey, picked up the " Petit Camerade," and got in. I lay inside on the wooden floor with my head on a biscuit tin, and knew nothing more until Chris pulled me out in the hospital yard at Calais—4.30 a.m.

" You've slept peacefully all the way," she said cheerily. " Oh, but it's cold " ; and not a sign of fatigue nor strain did she display.

So ended our night in Nieuport—a city of death and desolation, one of the many that cry to God for vengeance on the Boches.

CHAPTER VII

AN ENGLISH BILLET

Boulogne Quai was busy. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Belgians were running round, each in their own way typical of their nation. Nell drew "Unity" to a halt between a French and an English car, and proceeded to change a tyre. The French driver protested it was a hard job for a woman—the English were courageous—an Englishwoman, to change a heavy tyre like that! The English driver strolled languidly round the car, stood for an instant watching, sauntered slowly back to his own 'bus, strolled back to ours, levers in hand, and still in unbroken silence took tyre and nuts and operations generally out of Nell's capable hands. Only when the new tyre was on did he speak.

"That'll do, I'm thinkin'," he remarked wisely, and strolled off again.

Down at the quaiside a cheery, slightly

rotund personage, clean-shaven and in mufti, turned to me.

"Is that your car over there—Unic Ambulance?"

I replied truthfully.

"Who are you attached to?" he asked—"English Red Cross?"

"Why do you ask?" I replied, "because I hail from the Scottish hills."

"You've got no number on the car," he returned; "you must have a number now."

"Really," I said superciliously. "In ——, where we are stationed, we don't use numbers; haven't done since October."

His eyes twinkled, and he solemnly assured me that we were then exempt from having numbers. Someone told me later he was the chief detective, or something of the sort, and a power in Boulogne. However, we always grin when we meet.

The leave-boat arrived meanwhile, and the brother with it. So we sailed off merrily towards that Mecca of the British Expeditionary Force—G.H.Q. It would be an indiscretion to name it as a town, because everyone knows, even the people in England.

The Germans knew before the B.E.F.; they always do. A Canadian told me the other day how he and his comrades left England in severe ignorance of their destination. Even when they started to march from railhead to their little spot in the trenches they were in blissful ignorance, and as they "took over" and were busy settling in mud and dug-outs, still not knowing where they were, a cheery Teuton from the trench opposite shouted across in the darkness:

"Shut up, you Canadians; we know you're there!"

However, that is by the way.

Nell and a gallant Scots Grey were in front, my brother and I sat behind, our legs dangling on the tailboard. We had lots to talk of—for in war-time one does not see much of one's relatives. The long hills, the wide stretches of country, the fascination of the vast views, held us too; and then the darkness came, slowly at first with a mellow golden sunset, and then—rain. Oh, that rain!—but we did not heed it much. It was an unknown road to Nell; once we overshot it and had to return, but at last we came to G.H.Q. and

drew up before the hotel in the big square. The brother was proud of us, but I think his Scots Grey friend was bashful. They tried to get a sitting-room, but that was impossible, and they had to face the roomful of khaki-clad men with us, who, women-like, were hugely enjoying their embarrassment and pretending to be unconscious of it. For ladies, even ladies who are military, are not supposed to penetrate to G.H.Q. We had a much-needed meal and started off again. This time the way was hard to find, and the rain and darkness increased. But we swung on past convoys, through sleeping villages, enjoying the astonishment of sentries at the vision of women soldiers as we swept off into the night. At last we struck Hazebrouck, and the brother wanted to send us back from there, but we wouldn't go.

We left the Scots Grey and his bags, and the brother and I got in front with Nell, and off we went again. We stumbled on an A.S.C. depôt and took some petrol on board. The two sentries were Scots, and vastly overcome at hearing their own tongue spoken by a woman in the heart of that little French

village. On again through a still and quiet town, devoted to Staff—a town where, I have heard men say, no Englishwomen have been since the war (but Nell and I knew better). At last we reached *the* village, where the billets were, and the brother ushered us in proudly. It was a little cottage—on one side a sitting-room, on the other a kitchen. Three mattresses were on the floor, with sleeping bags and pyjamas spread out ; a door led into another room, the adjutant's, who had the privilege of a room to himself. Books, papers, chocolate boxes (empty, I regret to say) were strewn about ; pipes, cigarettes, and a gorgeous English home-made cake. The orderly appeared and got us some cocoa, and we wandered out to see the brother's horses. They were stabled at the back, and very "comfy" they looked. The man who was on guard was grateful for the boxes of "Gold Flake" we showered on him, and we left lots for further distribution.

Then we had cocoa, and the brother was very worried about us going back in the darkness and rain, but we wanted to catch a boat at Calais next day. However, he sent

his man with two horses to wait for him at a certain spot, and he was to come with us so far to show us the way. We ran up the road, past the little church, past an open window where floods of light streamed through (all the village was in darkness), and at a table with lamps—and, ye gods! a yellow silk lamp shade—we saw the brother's Colonel, who had arrived by the same boat, having a merry meal with three French officers. The brother stopped us farther along outside a cottage and crept up the garden path followed closely by me.

He tapped on a shuttered window and called softly: "Hallo, Harry, are you asleep?" And I, seized with the demon of mischief, laughed: "Hallo, Harry, are you asleep?"

A gasp of astonishment followed my voice, and "Harry" flung back the shutters and appeared blinking, still in wonderful pyjamas. He was delighted to see the brother and more delighted to see me—utter stranger as I was—and hastily appeared in a British warm, etc., to be formally introduced. His delight knew no bounds. It was months since he had spoken to Englishwomen, and

he offered to go and sleep with the brother if we would stay till morning and have his room. But we were firm, and out in the road were chatting gaily. "Unity" was ready to start; a baby canal was on one side of the road. The brother and Harry were in the roadway, Nell on the box, and I frivolling with the headlights. Suddenly the brother shouted, seized a flashlight, and sprang to the rear of the car waving it. Then I saw him leap backwards, throw up his hands, and disappear into the baby canal.

Harry's shout of "Jump for your lives!" Nell's sudden rush—a crash—and the sudden swerve of the Unic towards me were all simultaneous, and I leapt backward—down, down into slimy, cold, horrible water. I fumbled wildly in the air; one thought alone dominated me—"I had new boots on." Why in that moment they gripped my whole mind I cannot tell. I thought for a moment I would drown. Harry's strong hands seized mine and pulled me up to firm ground, and all my gratitude said was "My new boots will be ruined." Then my senses steadied down. "Where is ——?" I shouted, for I remem-

bered vividly his shout and the glimpse of that great car crashing into us; but my brother was beside me, so was Nell; and Harry, too, appeared.

Then a tall man in khaki hastened towards us from the other car.

"Much damage, you fellows?" he called, and I replied there seemed to be a good deal. I felt rather than saw the start of surprise, and then his eyes peered into my face as he saluted.

"I beg your pardon, I did not expect to find a lady!"

Still suffering from the shock, he walked backwards a step looking at the car, and my warning cry came too late; he disappeared over the same kilometre stone as I had and *sat* down in the water, his arms and legs waving in the air for one ludicrous moment.

"It is all right; no, I am not wet," he declared, like the sportsman he was, and we pushed old "Unity" along to a corner, and they set to work to repair her. The chauffeur of the other car was annoyed with life, and he promptly tried to drive his car on a bit; but the steering gear was smashed, and amid our

howls of laughter he toppled over into a ditch, and there his car hung on one wheel —a pathetically droll object.

It was clear we could not push on over unknown country with a damaged car, so the brother set off on foot to recall his horses. The three officers (French interpreters) who had run us down were already hammering and struggling with our engine in their shirt sleeves, despite the rain. They were very gallant gentlemen, and at last we were persuaded to leave them to their task and go with Harry to his billet. Stretchers from the car made beds for Harry and the brother on the kitchen floor, whilst Nell and I were to have his room. I got off my wet boots and dried my feet at the stove, and we found some coffee and began to grind it. Then Harry's "landlady" appeared—a dear old soul, who proceeded to boil water and get us coffee and rolls and butter, though it was now 2.30 a.m. She stoutly refused to go to bed. It appears she had been an interested spectator of the smash and subsequent events, and I rather fancy she thought we ought to be chaperoned!

We had a merry meal, and a strange experience it was, for I suppose few, if any, Englishwomen have passed that way since war started and spent a night billeted in the English lines. We went to bed soon after 3, and slept peacefully till 6, when we found more coffee and rolls and eggs all ready for us. The French interpreter had returned to see the car start, and as he and Harry gathered a few flowers for us and the brother's orderly cleaned our boots we could hear the heavy booming of the guns in the distance. The sun was shining and spring was in the air: a passing regiment of English Tommies cheered us lustily; they broke their lines, terribly craning their necks to see their country-women. Dear lads! I suppose they had not seen one for months. We got aboard, and the interpreter turned the handle. Harry shook our hands and bade us "au revoir" reluctantly. We promised to return that day week and stay a day. (We did, but only to find empty billets and the regiment gone to Ypres!) As for the brother, he stood there in the sunlight, big and strong and happy; and my heart was heavy despite the prospect

of seeing him in a week. Was he, too, troubled with foreboding ? I know not. For a moment he took my hands in his as we said farewell. There were gay and cheery greetings. The spring of life and hope and love seemed very full that morning, and my eyes kept turning to the big brother in the sunlight, straight and tall and fit. Was it a warning, that weight at my heart ?—a knowledge that never again would I see him standing so, the sun's rays on his dark eyes and cheery smile.

Ah me ! It was only a month later, within 30 miles of that sunny spot, that I knelt in silent agony by his side as he too passed into the Great Beyond !

CHAPTER VIII

THE SENTRY AND PARIS IN WARTIME

The night was dark and chilly. All that long, rainy Sunday we had laboured over tyres by the roadside, a tiny *estaminet* providing us at length with hot coffee. Then on again into the little country town, where no amount of inquiries could produce a garage. True, there were signboards relating to automobiles on two doorways, there was a hotel that announced "Essence" and "Garage"; but everywhere, it was told us sadly, the war had taken the men and the cars; tyres were no longer in stock—not even a boy to repair. For another three hours we struggled with an inner tube of which the valve leaked, and all round us were inner tubes in various stages of senile decay, and in my heart I cursed my folly in having started with fewer than a dozen spares! But then, could one have foreseen three bursts and a wretched punc-

ture ? I decided it was unwise to indulge in Sunday travelling. However, at last a kindly old Frenchman and his daughter came to our aid—took me with them to see their tyres and supplied us with an inner tube that did not leak, supplied me with a cup of English tea, bread, butter and jam. I felt so greedy when I returned to poor Nell, who had been struggling on with her punctures. At last we were off ; the large and rather unpleasant crowd were pushed back sufficiently to let us through, and we left the village behind cheerfully. " Unity " ran like a bird, responding generously to Nell's light, sure touch. The sun set in a grey haze and the darkness descended. We ran on : kilometres flew past gaily ; adventure and the song of the road was in our souls. Then we came to a barrier. A waving lantern warned us to stop ; two little blue figures shambled alongside, and I handed over the magic pink paper that was " Open Sesame " to towns in the war zone that one refers to with a delicious thrill as " Somewhere in France." But what was this ? The signature and seal we held in reverence were not known to the little " piou-piou."

The one who held the *laissez-passer* became voluble.

"Pas français—des femmes—tres louches," were remarks that fell on our astonished ears. Indignantly—for was not the standing of my country involved?—I announced "that an English military pass was good everywhere."

"Non, non," screamed our little ally; "this is France—this is not a French pass."

I turned "dour" and my remarks impressed the second sentry, who urged his comrade to let us pass. The comrade was annoyed, hesitated, and walked round our car. Then came a howl of derisive delight:

"Where is your number? You have no number! Fetch the corporal of the guard—you who would let pass these strange women."

"We do not use numbers in ——" said I firmly; "we have many cars and we have no number—no, not one, except that we keep inside the bonnet. Regardez."

He found the number on the engine and nearly dropped a match inside.

"You stay here," he shouted excitedly. "Your papers are not in order; you have no

number; it is night, and you are women; we shall see . . . . Go, Jacques, fetch the corporal—at once, I tell you. Ah! there are spies in France."

These last remarks were hurled at us loudly, to impress the little crowd that had gathered from nowhere. Sentry 2 hurried off to fetch his corporal. Nell and I pulled out our large khaki handkerchiefs and pretended to dry imaginary tears, and laughed. Alas! our little "piou-piou's" fury increased. He pulled a cartridge with a malignant gesture from his pouch; he ostentatiously inserted it in his rifle, and he glared at us malevolently.

"If you advance one step, if you retire one step," he shouted, sweeping his free arm towards heaven with a great and dramatic movement, "*I will shoot!*"

His sweeping hand came down heavily on the bonnet of the car, and alas! the radiator was boiling. A yell of pain ended his patriotic speech, and he almost overbalanced with the shock. The loud laughter of the crowd did not appease him.

"You tell me what wrong. You come for supper now. I speak English. He keep you

here all night. He silly little man," said a cheery and sympathetic voice.

A woman broke through the crowd.

"I speak all English—dressmaker in London, me. I like English people."

She proudly carried on a conversation with us, and triumphantly translated to the crowd.

"This man is a fool," I told her; "he has been drinking, and we have an English military pass, signed by a great English general. Oh, but the silly man will be punished!"

The crowd began to advise him to let the car pass; then the corporal arrived. He accepted my explanation about the number, but not, alas! the English seal we had with much pains procured and with great pride possessed!

However, having for long formed the habit of carrying multitudinous papers about with me, I managed to find a very ancient pass issued by a certain embassy begging everyone to treat me and my car with kindness! This paper, long despised and rejected near the front, was seized on with delight by the corporal, who, alas! noted the discrepancy

in the name on it and on the pink pass. Feebly I faltered that between the issue of one and the other I had changed my name—in fact, I faltered, I had married. To me the naked truth sounded a lame explanation of a suspicious fact, but to my infinite relief the corporal chortled with joy.

"Pass, mesdemoiselles" (*had* he believed the explanation?); "let these ladies pass, you ——," and reluctantly, fiercely, the little sentry removed himself from between our headlights. Muttering, growling, he stood to one side to let us through the little town. The crowd sent a joyous "Bon voyage" after us, and our cheery little friend, the dressmaker from London, could be heard far behind us relating to the corporal her conversation with the English miss—those strange English, whose women tour 300 miles of France in war time alone and unafraid. I have often wondered if the little sentry remembered to extract his cartridge before it did any harm.

We pressed on in the darkness along the great white roads; a moon was rising slowly, and soon the whole way lay bathed in silver light. It was cold, intensely cold, but

" Unity's " engine was running well, and the night air was soothing. Our mission had been satisfactorily accomplished, and we were at peace with all the world.

The hours and the kilometres passed rapidly. Long, straight roads and stretches of fields gave place to towns, and a glimpse of the silver river and steep banks and woods around it. We arrived at Etampes late, indeed after midnight, and a friendly porter at the station suggested a hotel. We rang up the good woman, left " Unity " in the garage, and got to bed, tired, indeed, but happy. Next morning we were up betimes, and our bill was the smallest I have ever settled, owing to the dear lady of the hotel classing us as chauffeurs and showing her appreciation of our work by sparing our pockets. So on we ran this time with a blue sky and a life-giving sun overhead, winding along the river bank, loitering to admire the views, and at length through the great woods, beautiful in their solitude. What a lovely road that is from Tours to Paris ; and what a happy life must be the life of a motor tramp ! The approach to Paris on this early spring day seems now to memory's eye a

vista of blossom—orchards on every side, the shimmer of snow across them, and the fresh greens of spring. The painful process of navigating miles of rough *pavé* was atoned for by the glimpse of woods and moors and river, and at length Paris herself—Paris in war time!

At first there seemed little to indicate the War. To our eyes, so long accustomed to uniforms and small shops and tents and huts, this world of wonderful shop windows and daintily-dressed women and busy scenes of traffic was novel and thrilling. But very soon we picked out the black frocks, the crêpe veils, the limping soldiers, the hospitals, the subdued sorrow that seemed to hover over the city.

The crowd seemed to find us of as much interest as we found them. We found the offices we had to report at, and then ran out to Neuilly to the American Hospital. What a wonderfully organised place it is! Rows of immaculate motor cars in the courtyard, with lamps that glistened in the sunlight, burnished brass and smoothly painted bodies. Poor "Unity" jibbed self-consciously as

she was drawn up to her place in the ranks ; but "Unity's" dull coat and unpolished brass hid a stout heart that never failed in difficulty or danger—I, at least, was proud of her.

Inside were luxurious wards, white-clad, clever-looking doctors, beautiful women in white garments that made our weather-beaten khaki look dull and dirty. They received us most kindly and gave us a kindly send-off. Having an hour and a half to spare, we could not resist memories of Rumpelmeyers, and, despite our khaki uniforms, we were soon rejoicing over chocolate and chestnut cakes. Near us at a small table two ladies in beautifully-cut clothes talked of us and smiled in our direction, and at length one came over and said to us cordially :

"I must tell you how we admire you and your work. If I were twenty years younger I would come with you myself."

Dear, kindly Paris, roused from light-hearted frivolity ; what a cheery break our little visit made !

We left Paris late in the afternoon, and were hung up with tyre trouble again and again,

until, indeed, we reached our next break at 2 a.m. and found the chief hotels full and closed up. However, we managed to get shelter, and next morning took a pitiful tale to the friendly great ones near by, and borrowed money to pay our bill and speed us on our way —for my last forty francs had gone to buy a new inner tube at 1 that morning in a tiny town. And so once more to Calais, where we were greeted with new orders that our cars must be numbered henceforth.

To show our independence, I promptly submitted a list of numbers which began with F.A.N.Y. 1 and ended (then) with F.A.N.Y. 7. To my exceeding joy the numbers and lettering were accepted, and from that day the French sentries dubbed us the FANYS, as on the approach of a car they at once caught sight of the number and with their ready smiles exclaimed " Pass, Fany."

CHAPTER IX

LIFE AT RUCHARD

Ruchard! Does the name bring to your mind anything at all? Have you, perchance, in time of peace drifted through Tours and Azay, Angy and Amboise? Do the old historical *châteaux* of France spring up before your mind's eye, with their stately terraces and fertile gardens—their charm and grace of a long-vanished race of courtiers? In summer there are few valleys so smiling and so prosperous; in winter few places so bleak and damp and bare. And in the centre, tucked away, lies Ruchard—a vast plain, now, of huts and tents; but when first I saw it the huts were few and the tents many, and mud was everywhere.

Here, then, is the home of thousands of soldiers. I cannot, for obvious reasons, deal in figures; but we are concerned with only 700, and these are convalescents. To

them the F.A.N.Y.'s have brought comfort and comradeship and an atmosphere of home for which the lonely little Belgian soldiers are intensely grateful. In April, then, of 1915 I paid my first visit to the camp, and returned from it sad of heart for the want of comfort and the monotony of life for these brave fellows. Many things intervened, and it was August before I returned. Chris drove us down in "Le Petit Camerade"—the good little Ford that has done so much good work. And with us went Cole Hamilton—ready for the pioneer job in front of her.

The journey was not without its amusements—*and* its trials. "Le Petit Camerade" started by bursting a tyre before we reached Boulogne. That was soon remedied.

The day was intensely hot, the road was long and gritty, and one tyre after another burst joyously, and soon even the two spares had gone the way of the others. Chris smiled through it all—imperturbable. I chafed and fumed, and was intensely disagreeable. And so, instead of having afternoon tea at Rouen, we were yet 12 kilometres from that stately town at something to 11 at night. And not

all the coaxing in the world would make those tyres and tubes behave. (It was more than tiresome.) Our supper was coffee and eggs in a wayside *estaminet*, and the good woman tried her best to make us partake of tinned tripe. And at length, with the sacking that contained our brand-new tent tied round the wheel with the ropes cut from that same brand new tent, we rumbled and bumped into Rouen towards midnight. All garages were closed save one, for so the French help to make munitions, and a grand thing it is that every garage becomes by night a factory of munitions. Into the one garage we gained admittance, to find the *concierge* screaming like one possessed, and an officer—whose nationality shall remain a secret—trying to light his lamps with unsteady gait and a cheery confidence in his powers of speech. The *concierge* and the officer were quarrelling (over national customs perhaps), and the officer demanding paraffin wildly, got it (only it was petrol), and on applying his match up went his two headlights in a blaze.

At this juncture three Red Cross men offered me a seat in their car as far as the

RESTING BY THE WAYSIDE.

THE FIRST SOLDIERS' CANTEEN IN THE BELGIAN ARMY.
RUCHARD, 1915.

Supplies Depôt. On the way they sighted a baby Peugeot racing along.

"That's the man you want," they said, and gave chase.

At the barrier a temporary check brought us level. I was hoisted unceremoniously beside the pilot of the Peugeot, and the Red Cross car sped into the darkness and vanished.

When I had recovered my breath I looked at my companion. He was young, immaculately clad in the usual khaki and sam-browne, and his face was quite expressionless. In fact he had the air of a man to whom such a trivial incident as the sudden shooting of a lone damsel into his car in the streets of Rouen at dead of night was quite unremarkable.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked, without the shadow of a smile, but in a polite, friendly way.

"Yes," I answered frankly. "I want two Ford tyres and two inner tubes, and I want them to-night."

He slowed down his car, turned neatly on one wheel, and talked of general matters. So small is the world that he knew intimately friends whom I had visited in New Zealand!

"Here's our place!" He hooted at two great gates, but no reply was vouchsafed. Then he hammered on the doors, and then to my horror he scrambled up those great gates and vanished over the top. I sat in the car waiting for a shot to break the stillness, and for myself to be arrested as a spy. But the great gates creaked back. My pilot took the wheel once more, and we went into a great yard, where all was darkness and silence and long covered buildings. We drew up noisily, and a figure appeared half-way down the yard.

"Halt! Who goes there?" came a voice faltering with surprise.

And then . . . Well, the sentry hadn't much show, and I learnt the correct way to call the guard over the coals if you break into their precincts like a thief at dead of night. A sleepy corporal wandered through stacks and stacks of tyres of all sizes and makes, and at length produced what was wanted. Oh, joyous moment! The British Army is never to be found lacking in time of need.

But alas! Sleepy as was the corporal, and sympathetic for my plight, he had orders to

accept only *one* signature for those tyres. My pilot proved himself a true comrade. He put me back in the car, took the wheel, and was off like a flash past barriers and pickets, and drew up in front of a great gloomy *château* on a lonely country road. This was true adventure. I chuckled to myself at the faces of the dear people at home could they see me now! Of a sudden lights flashed at all the windows; pyjama-clad figures were silhouetted; anxious voices asked what the something, something all the row was. An awful silence followed. The figures withdrew hastily; the announcement that there was a lady in the car quite overwhelmed them. In ten minutes the one possible signature was in our possession, and in half an hour the tyres and inner tubes were also in our possession and we were on our way to the garage.

A weary Chris and a weary subaltern who had stayed to offer his services were tinkering with the car. Cole Hamilton slumbered at odd moments in the seat of the landaulette. My pilot tackled the job, and after much trouble got a tube on and pinched it. What a time! He got on a new tube and a stiff new

tyre at last. Cole Hamilton saved our lives and sobered the *concierge* by making Bovril on a Tommy's cooker. The final triumph was achieved when our kindly pilot took a long iron pole from the floor to hammer the new tyre in its place, tools being hard to obtain as the *concierge* was drunk. It was nearly 4 a.m. as we passed from the garage into the cold night air and made for Vendôme.

We reached Ruchard at mid-day—200 kilometres—having stopped for an hour and a half for breakfast and an hour's sleep. We reported at camp duly and fixed our appointment with the General.

Ruchard in summer, with the sun streaming over everything, is alluring. The formalities at camp settled, we were taken by the Colonel to General P—— at Tours. He was courtly and kindly to a degree ; his words of gratitude were eloquent, and he did not stop at words. The expenses of building a hut had weighed heavily on our minds. He gave us generously the use of two large stone huts, and ordered the dividing wall to be knocked down. And so we got our barrack.

The weeks that followed saw the barrack

transformed. Tables and chairs, a large counter, a small dining-room for the staff, a kitchen with a range and a big boiler of hot water, a store-room—all these were built by the soldiers under Cole Hamilton's supervision. Then the interned men, or "*compagnie spéciale*," painted the whitewashed walls with the arms of Belgium and the Allies, and over the door painted largely the badge of the F.A.N.Y. Corps. Posters of shipping companies, advertisements that were artistic, went up as pictures; casement curtains finished off the windows; and now the stage erected by the men themselves has transformed the bare barrack into a home. The piano we pay for—12 francs a month; and what a big 12 francs' worth of happiness is ensured! The men get up concerts and acts, and draw their own programmes and posters.

Chris taught them English; one of her classes held five professors, now soldiers! How they love it all, these men! And it warms one's heart to stand at the counter pouring out tea and coffee, giving them cake and chocolate, hearing their stories, listening to

the experiences they have undergone, admiring the pictures of their wives and babies. Then they love games—bagatelle, draughts, cards, chess, dominoes ; and how they love to have a game with an "English miss"—a "Fany." And after midday dinner is over in camp they go out and play rounders or hockey and forget their sorrows and their exile.

All afternoon the room is crowded ; then it is cleared for an hour and crowded again in the evening. Twice a week the mad and epileptic come, and how they enjoy themselves ! They play at cards, and one man stakes "one million francs," "two million," "ten million "; and they palm cards and hide them under the table and cheat frankly and gaily and happily. They sing, too—poor madmen whose voices once drew thousands to listen. One poor lad broke into violence, and was sent "to be cured" to a neighbouring asylum. We heard after his return that he was tied with his hands above his head for *four hours* under a cold douche. And that was the cure !

There are huts close by for consumptives, who may not use the canteen, but they are visited by Nurse Lovell, who cares for them

with the utmost devotion, which they repay tenfold ! Such is Ruchard.

The work is hard and the comforts few, but the workers give their services cheerily, and do not think of themselves. Miss Crockett must miss her Australian sunshine in the long dreary days of winter, but she stays on undaunted. Miss Cole Hamilton directed it all—led it through the difficulties of the start ; Chris cheered them all and taught them and sang to them, and all the staff have done their share ; and it is no small thing to bring sunshine into the lives of hundreds of gallant soldiers—not only sunshine, but strength ; and that is proved by the utter lack of crime, drunkenness, etc., since the F.A.N.Y. Canteen opened.

In closing, I may say that, whatever experiences people may have, the F.A.N.Y.'s have always met with respect and gratitude from all soldiers, Belgian and British and French. Their first year's work was chiefly amongst Belgians. They had Belgians as patients in hospital at Lamark, as orderlies, as comrades at the front, and as friends at Ruchard, and everywhere they have found

intense gratitude from the men themselves—an appreciation of their services that has encouraged them to continue in giving them, a childlike confidence in their power to help, and a warm admiration for the trifling sacrifices of home-life and comforts that such work has entailed.

Perhaps the future generations of Belgian girls will receive broader and finer training in consequence. Certainly the chivalry of all our soldiers has been tested and proved over and over again. In that lonely world of men, where few women were found in the beginning, the F.A.N.Y.'s were as safe as in their own homes. Courtesy and consideration were the chief characteristics of the Belgian soldiers—brave and gay as they are, simple in their tastes, and simple in their pleasures. They saw with wonder how women could work, and they surrounded women henceforth with respectful devotion.

May little Belgium soon come into her own, and her people be reunited and restored to their hearths and homes where that is possible. They are plucky and uncomplaining, and deserve a great reward.

CHAPTER X

ODDMENTS AND THE END

THE F.A.N.Y.'s have always prided themselves on their versatility. Among ambulance work, canteens and hospital, they still had time and place for a motor kitchen and a motor bath.

The motor kitchen first, as it came to Calais in February, 1915, and with its auburn-haired owner and pilot. It did work at the station, it went to distant troops with coffee and soup, and then one day its great adventure came. That was quite an ordinary day in May when a Belgian officer and a member of the British Intelligence Staff called to ask for the loan of the motor kitchen. It was 3 o'clock when they stated the case—that a certain Belgian battery attached to an English division would be grateful to have the kitchen with them to cook for the men. At 6 o'clock the kitchen was filled with provender, a tent

on the roof; petrol and paraffin inside; Betty and Tommy on the box, with a sergeant sent by the battery to guide them. I saw them off with envy in my heart—and triumph; for here at last prejudices had been swept aside—the battery was on its way to the firing line.

It is not for me to tell fully that tale of gallantry, but at least the bare facts have been told me. The first three or four days were spent in tiny villages, and billets were found for Betty and Tommy. (This is not improper or even romantic—Tommy is a F.A.N.Y., therefore a girl.) Then—height of desire—the battery came along the rough shell-shattered road to Ypres, and through Ypres and beyond Ypres. Here was congestion of convoys and troops; but the driver never failed, nor did the gallant little Ford. Along a road rough and almost impassable the kitchen advanced, and when the battery settled for the night the two F.A.N.Y.'s, after mess, turned into rest in an ancient barn. The booming of the guns all round lulled them to sleep—their last thoughts were of the struggle going on three miles from

them. . . . At 3 in the morning they woke to a strange, sickly smell, and wondered if the barn was on fire ; then they were called, and an orderly brought them their gas masks, which were being issued to the whole battery. This, then, explained the smell, and the sick feeling that came over them. They got out into the air—no longer fresh, alas ! From the direction of the trenches men were coming—weary, staggering figures—first one or two, and then a little group of five, of which the two outside figures lurched against and seemingly supported the other three ; and suddenly two of them rolled over and lay on the road, gasping, spluttering, sick unto death, with grey-green faces, and eyes which mirrored the horrors of hell. Then Betty and Tommy started to work. Man after man was helped into the barn—pulled to his feet, steadied down the road—and hot strong coffee was forced down their throats. Two Canadians had lost their masks, and the two girls handed them theirs, and soaked wads of cotton wool in soda, and tied that across their own faces. Came two men helped by comrades, themselves scarcely able to walk, and these two

would yield to no treatment. The Canadian medical officer came, shrugged a sorrowful shoulder, and passed on ; but the F.A.N.Y.'s blood was up. They made coffee blacker and hotter than ever coffee was made before, they forced it down the throats of the two whose lives seemed ended, and when the Canadian doctor returned his looks were more eloquent than his curt words of commendation. That day, indeed, the kitchen justified itself, and two lives were saved for England. Then the wounded and the gassed had to be carried to a *château* half a mile down the road ; and that half-mile of roadway was under fire. But Tommy, the F.A.N.Y. lance-corporal, and Betty, the chauffeur, directed the stretcher-bearers as calmly as in the hospital yard at Calais, and the barn was cleared. One fact impressed them, and that was that the men with South African ribbons held to their rifles as long as the power to stand remained in them—a small thing and yet significant.

And what was the end of this story ? Well —rumours grew round it as rumours will, but it was a plain, bald ending. The British powers that were awoke amazed to the fact

that two girls were in the ranks. The other fact that they bore themselves as men was of no avail—nor even that in consequence two men still lived whose breath had gone from their bodies ; and so an officer came with courteous but strict injunctions to escort them to G.H.Q., and at G.H.Q. a bland and genial personage interviewed them and blandly and genially suggested that the hospital at Calais was healthier than the trenches near Ypres —and that was all.

Now for the bath. A certain Scottish and enterprising firm—the same that produced the Unic in seven days as a complete motor ambulance because it was essential—invented a bath-house fitted with large tanks to contain and boil water, and ten collapsible full-length canvas baths, and a disinfecting press to hold clothing. This bath-house they put on a motor chassis, and made taps and fitted piping, and surrounded the whole with awning that could be furled up on the outside of the bath when not in use. This, then, was a motor bath-house destined to supply baths for luckless soldiers who were not near bathing establishments. This ingenious and intricate

affair was shown me by the director of the firm, and alas! it was going to the Director-General of Medical Services. I was promised the refusal of the next one built, and wondered hopefully where the funds would come from. Then two energetic and enterprising sisters blew in at the hospital on their way from Paris to England, joined the F.A.N.Y.'s, and when they returned from England brought the bath with them. Then the bath and red tape made each other's acquaintance; but after all red tape is like barbed wire entanglements —if you can't cut it, get round it. And the bath got round. In after years, perchance, grandchildren of this generation may hear from the lips of veterans of the Great War how once upon a time were many men in khaki who had to go for long weeks without baths, until one day came two maidens attired in khaki and with them a large unwieldy-looking monster; and of how ten baths were laid out in neat rows and awnings unfurled and 250 men in a day spent fifteen minutes each in a bath . . . ; and how by this means the troops refreshed themselves. And these maidens belonged to a strange corps called

F.A.N.Y.'s, who seemed to get just where they were most wanted at the right moment. And not only British, but Belgian soldiers can tell this tale.

There have been other side-tracks also. The sudden arrival of two divisions from the front at a station in Northern France was coped with by the F.A.N.Y.'s, who carried on a day and night canteen and a full hospital with one staff, which required four-hour shifts for the girls.

Then another not unimportant task has been giving concerts to the men in the various camps, and highly appreciated such concerts are. Then, too, the chaplains have again and again been thankful to have a F.A.N.Y. play for the Sunday services, and perhaps sing a sacred solo at the end; and one *padre* told me his congregations were doubled in every camp after this innovation was effected.

Now, after a year's probation, the F.A.N.Y.'s are within sight of their goal,—pioneers of women's work—and a fitting ending to this volume comes with the tale of the F.A.N.Y. Convoy. As long ago as November, 1914, a certain distinguished Surgeon-General at

G.H.Q. courteously dismissed the idea of the F.A.N.Y.'s driving motor ambulances for the British Army. He explained regretfully that we were not yet attached to the R.A.M.C. . . . It was impossible. I grinned cheerfully and as a parting shot announced :

" We'll do it yet ; wait and see."

And he smilingly replied :

" I'll back you to win hands down, so it's au revoir."

In July, 1915, I wrote to the War Office on behalf of the F.A.N.Y.'s and offered a motor-ambulance convoy for Calais or any base which they might suggest. The answer to this was in the negative. " It was not considered practical."

Three or four months later my " sister-officer " and I paid a flying visit to G.H.Q. and reminded our friend there of his " au revoir " ; thence we hurried to two other " Somewheres " in France, pressing the possibilities of a woman's convoy, and at last, with a helping (and very helpful) shove from a place officially designated I.G.C.H.Q. (which he who runs may read), the F.A.N.Y. Corps was accepted for service with the British

Army. On New Year's Day, 1916, a convoy of motor ambulance and motor lorries, drivers, orderlies, and cooks—all women—started work in France.

Their work is strenuous and of real service. Each girl driver keeps her car in running order; she turns out in the morning and cleans and oils her car. When the barges come down the motor ambulances are there drawn up in a straight line, each girl standing to attention beside each car. The wounded are loaded in: the driver starts off slowly and carefully through the streets, and delivers her load at the hospital indicated. Then, as need may be, she may return for other loads, or be sent on an "isolation" job—that is to say, she drives to a camp some miles out to fetch in a case of fracture or other casualty. Then she may have to stand to and drive loads of wounded from the hospital to the hospital-boats; and two or three times a week she has to take "loads" of convalescents to a neighbouring base some 20 miles away. This is the first convoy of women, but already it is not the last. Here is scope for hundreds of women, for this work can quite well be given to women to

do. There is no danger and no untoward physical strain. If every convoy in base towns was " manned " by women, then all the men at present so employed could be given the rougher work further afield that women perhaps cannot undertake. Already, within ten months of the start, the F.A.N.Y. convoy has given such satisfaction it has been greatly increased; and I am confident it will yet increase.

Women have proved what they can do since the War broke out; and is this a mean record—for a corps that had no influence, no money, and no recognition to start with, that now, after two years' active service, it has more than doubled its membership and has five units working in France ?

A few names have been mentioned more than others, but the roll-call of the F.A.N.Y.'s will one day be published and give the names and services of all who have worked with the corps. For every individual member has rendered splendid service to the world, and when the history of the corps is written full justice will be done to all.

This is more or less a record of personal happenings taken from my diary, circulated privately and published now at the request of those friends whose interest was aroused. I have omitted the exciting story of Sister White and other two F.A.N.Y.'s who received the Order of Leopold from King Albert for bravery under fire. I have not dwelt upon the steady and wonderful work done by our band of trained nurses, nor the quiet devotion displayed by probationers and ward orderlies. I have not pictured our Belgian doctors or adjutant or orderlies—not even the irresistible humour of Louis, the orderly whose vocation calls him to the priesthood, who in his proud knowledge of the English language tells visitors blandly "he is learning to be a father."

All these things and many more will be related after the war is over in the History of the F.A.N.Y. Corps.

THE WHITEFRIARS PRESS, LTD., LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

WERT
BOOKBINDING
MIDDLETOWN, PA
MARCH 75
We're Quality Bound

D 640 M137n 1917

01120230R

NLM 05007283 8

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE